EXHIBIT 17

Election 2023: Priorities and Concerns of Houston Residents

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RICE UNIVERSITY
Kinder Institute for Urban Research

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Key Findings

Top priorities for Houston's next mayor:

- **About 8 in 10 Houston residents said it was very important for the next mayor to do something to reduce crime.** One-third of residents reported feeling their neighborhood was not a safe place to live, and 1 in 5 Houstonians reported "often" or "almost always" feeling unsafe in their day-to-day lives. To address the issue, 61% strongly agreed that Houston needed a mayor who would be "tough on crime," and 67% strongly agreed the city needed a mayor who would improve funding to mental health services and community policing as part of a strategy to reduce crime and improve safety.
- **Nearly three-quarters of Houston residents said it was very important for the next mayor to take action to improve the city's physical infrastructure, such as sidewalks, roads, and streetlights.** Thirty-eight percent of residents rated their sidewalks as either "poor" or "failing," and over 42% said their neighborhood streets and roads were "poor" or "failing." Residents are also unsure if enough has been done to make Houston more resilient to future storms. A slight majority thinks the city has become more resilient, but more than 4 in 10 do not.
- **Nearly three-quarters of Houston residents said it was very important for the next mayor to prioritize policies to make housing more affordable.** Almost 40% of Houstonians reported they were "often" or "almost always" worried about being able to pay the rent or mortgage each month. In addition, about 40% of residents were "often" or "almost always" worried about development making their neighborhood more expensive.
- Many of the top priority areas for the next mayor were shared by diverse groups in the population and across different regions of the city, providing several collective mandates for what residents want done by their next mayor.

Introduction

In November 2023, the city of Houston will vote to elect its 63rd mayor. As the fourth-most-populous city in the United States and third-largest city in the country covering 640 square miles, it is home to over 2.3 million residents. Houston is also home to a "strong-mayor" system of local government, which places significant power and authority in the hands of its mayor. Houston's mayor is the city's chief executive with the authority to appoint and dismiss department heads, establish rules and regulations for the city's departments, and set city council meeting agendas. Given its strong-mayor system, Houston's mayor is uniquely positioned to directly and immediately address the most pressing concerns of the city's residents.

A city benefits when the mayor serves all residents, not just those who get them elected. To aid in elevating the perspectives of all Houstonians, the findings detailed in this study are based on data gathered from individuals and neighborhoods all over the city — not just registered voters or those likely to vote in November. This report amplifies the city's challenges, opportunities and aspirations, and what all residents would like to see done by the next mayor.

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About this study

The data used for this report were collected from over 2,000 residents across the city of Houston — including its full and limited service areas — from April to June 2023 using a brief 10- to 15-minute online survey. Residents were chosen using an address-based sampling technique to create a sample representative of Houston. Addresses were sampled from within Houston city limits, which includes areas subject to Limited Purpose Annexation (LPAs). Residents in LPAs do not pay property taxes to the city of Houston, but are subject to city ordinances, regulations and services, and are eligible to vote in municipal elections.[1] The purpose of this research was to hear from all Houstonians who could be impacted by policies and decisions made by the city's next mayor, regardless of whether or not they intended to or could vote in the upcoming election.

The survey was made available in four languages: English, Spanish, Simplified Chinese and Vietnamese. Respondents received a $15 electronic gift card upon completion of the survey. To improve the representativeness of the data, sampling weights were developed to adjust for the age, education level, race/ethnicity and sex of the respondent. All results included in this report are weighted.

The demographic composition of the final, weighted sample closely mirrored the make-up of the city of Houston. For race and ethnicity, the sample consisted of about 7% Asian residents, 42% Hispanic residents, 19% Black residents, and 30% White residents. The remaining 2% identified as an other race/ethnicity. Survey respondents had to be 18 years old or older, and the median age in the sample was 40 years old, with about a quarter of the sample under 30 years old and a little more than a quarter of the sample 55 years old or older. Nearly one-third of the sample had a bachelor's degree or above as their highest level of education, while 42% of the sample had attained up to a high school diploma. Around 40% of the sample were homeowners, and almost half of the sample had lived in Houston for 20 years or longer. Nearly one-quarter had lived in the city for five years or less.

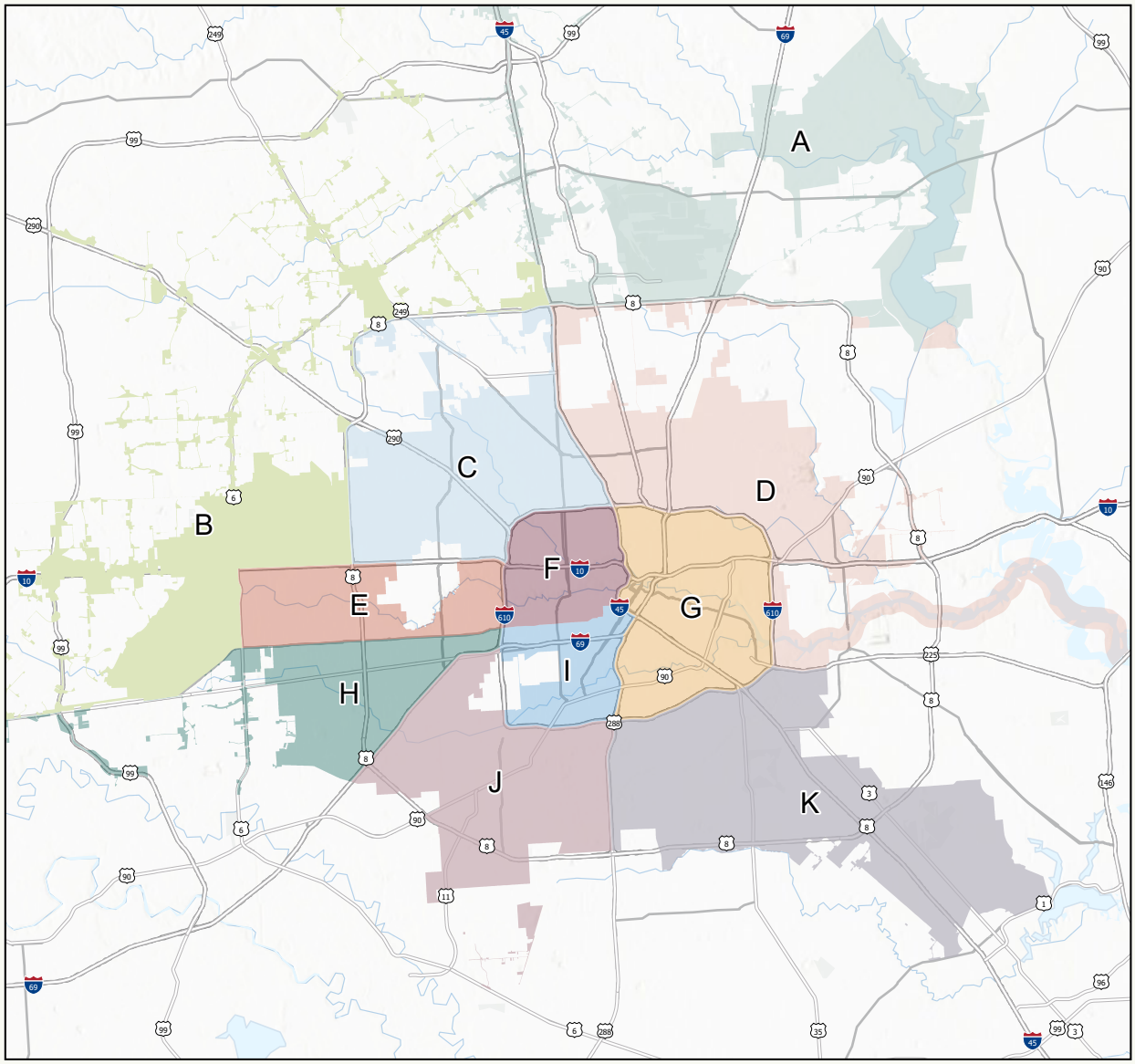
Statistical tests were used to help establish the presence or absence of relationships and associations across demographic and economic traits, survey items, and geographies. Effect sizes were calculated for any association that was statistically significant in order to determine if a finding was substantively meaningful. Detailed results of these statistical tests are available upon request. Findings discussed in the body of the report, and presented in tables, figures, and graphs can be assumed to be statistically significant and have a medium or large effect size, unless otherwise noted. None of the relationships or associations highlighted in this report should be interpreted as causal.

Responses were grouped into 11 regions for geographic analysis. Each region was created to consist of between 100 and 300 respondents by combining Census block groups based on their proximity to one another and the shared traits of who lived in each area (Table 1). Boundaries between regions were determined by major roadways, waterways, or Census block group boundaries. This study was conducted in partnership with Houston Landing, a nonpartisan and nonprofit news organization. It provided input on survey topics but did not participate in the analysis or development of this report.

1 Limited Purpose Annexation. 2 Tex. Local Gov. Code § 43.130 (1989, rev. 2003) https://statutes.capitol.texas.gov/Docs/LG/htm/LG.43.htm

TABLE 1 **Number of respondents per region in the city of Houston**

	Region	Number of respondents
A	Humble and Kingwood	116
B	I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	237
C	Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	111
D	Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	193
E	Uptown and Memorial	162
F	The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	182
G	Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward	271
H	Sharpstown, Chinatown, and Alief	193
I	West University and Museum District	181
J	Meyerland and Brays Oaks	226
K	Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	159



Conditions and Concerns of Houston Residents

To set the backdrop for the upcoming mayoral election, the survey asked Houstonians to provide information on their concerns, neighborhood conditions and circumstances, as well their experiences with city services. Similar concerns were held by residents and regions throughout the city, but some populations and regions faced distinct challenges.

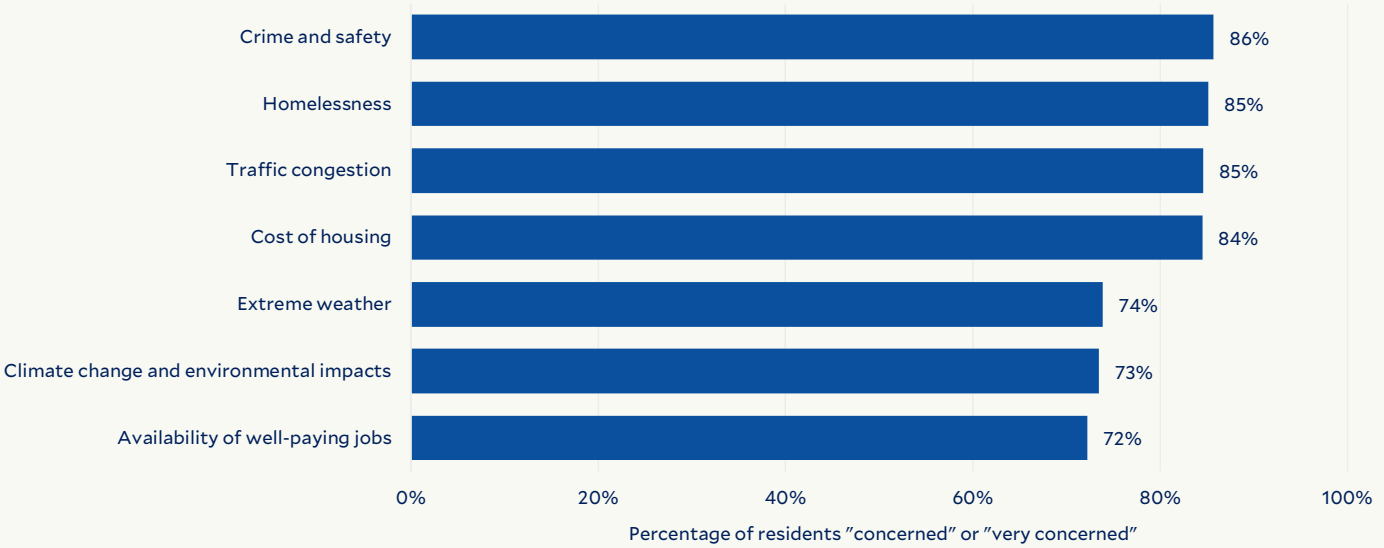
Concerns

City residents were asked how concerned they were about the following: climate change and its environmental impacts, extreme weather, crime and safety, the cost of housing, the availability of well-paying jobs, traffic congestion, and homelessness. Over 80% of Houston residents reported being either "concerned" or "very concerned" about crime and safety, homelessness, traffic congestion and the cost of housing (Figure 1).

The high level of concern for these four issues was shared by Asian, Black, Hispanic and White residents alike, as well as individuals across all education levels. Old and young Houstonians also shared similar levels of concern about affordable housing and traffic congestion, but there were slight differences in their reported concern about crime and safety and homelessness.

The vast majority of all age groups were either "concerned" or "very concerned" with crime and safety; however, about 78% of young adults answered that way compared to 86% of adults aged 30 to 54 years old and 93% of older adults aged 55 and above. Older adults were also more likely to express concern about homelessness, with about 93% reporting that they were either "concerned" or "very concerned," compared to 78% of young adults and 85% of adults aged 30 to 54 years old.

FIGURE 1 **Over 80% of Houston residents reported being concerned or very concerned with crime and safety, homelessness, traffic congestion, and the cost of housing in the city.**



Concern about crime and safety also differed slightly across regions of the city. About 76% of residents in both The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region and in the Interstate 10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region reported being "concerned" or "very concerned" with crime, while 89% of residents in the Uptown and Memorial region; the Spring Branch, Fairbanks and Greater Inwood region; and the Humble and Kingwood region reported the same. These slight differences do not diminish the shared concern of residents about crime and safety from across the city.

In addition to the top concerns, more than 70% of Houston residents reported being "concerned" or "very concerned" about extreme weather, climate change and its environmental impacts, and the availability of well-paying jobs.[2]

Concern about extreme weather was relatively static across groups and regions in the city. Any differences by race and ethnicity, education level, age, and geography were slight, and were either not significant or did not meaningfully change the main takeaway that 7 in 10 Houston residents were concerned about extreme weather.

Concern about climate change and its environmental impacts varied across race and ethnicity as well as region. Across all race and ethnic groups, more than two-thirds of Houston residents were concerned with climate change: 80% of Hispanic residents, 71% of Asian residents, 71% of Black residents and 67% of White residents reported being "concerned" or "very concerned" with climate change.

The Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region had the highest level of concern about climate change, with 84% of residents "concerned" or "very concerned," followed by the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region, where over 80% of residents reported being concerned. Buffalo Bayou and Brays Bayou run through both of these regions, with the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region also being home to Greens Bayou, one of the leading locations of flooded homes during Hurricane Harvey.

The Uptown and Memorial region had the fewest residents expressing concern about climate change with 63%. In every other region of the city, more than two-thirds of residents expressed being "concerned" or "very concerned" about climate change and its environmental impacts.

Concern about the availability of well-paying jobs differed by race and ethnicity as well as education level. Nearly 80% of Asian, Black and Hispanic residents reported being "concerned" or "very concerned" with the availability of well-paying jobs, compared to less than 60% of White residents. Additionally, a higher percentage of residents who had completed up to a high school diploma (79%) or some college education (78%) were "concerned" or "very concerned" about the availability of high-paying jobs, compared to 59% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or above. Concern about the availability of well-paying jobs also differed by region of the city, with some of the highest levels of concern in the Sharpstown, Chinatown, and Alief region (81% of residents) and Interstate 10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region (80% of residents), compared to about 59% of residents in the West University and Museum District region and about 53% in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region.

City Services

As Mayor Sylvester Turner finishes his second 4-year term in office, about 14% of Houstonians rated his overall job performance as "excellent," about 37% rated it as "good," and 35% gave it an "average" rating. In rating the local government overall in providing services to its residents, about 9% of Houstonians rated it "excellent," 32% rated it "good" and 41% rated it "average."

Houston residents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = failing and 5 = excellent) how well they felt the city was doing at providing certain services: water, sewage, trash pickup, recycling pickup, fire department and the police (Table 2). Around 20% of Houstonians gave an "excellent" rating to water, sewer and trash pickup, while 13% of city residents rated them as either "poor" or "failing." Twenty percent of residents also rated the police as "excellent"; however, 17% rated the police as "poor" or "failing."

Further exploring the views of residents who rated the police as "poor" or "failing" revealed relatively few differences across groups or across regions in the city. A resident's rating of the police was largely unrelated to

2 Respondents were not provided a definition of "well-paying jobs." The United Way of Greater Houston sets as the "survival budget" for families in Harris County an annual income between $59,800 and $63,200 (https://uwghcontent.blob.core.windows.net/$web/pdf/23-UW-ALICE-Harris%20County%20data%20sheet.pdf). The City of Houston Housing and Development Department has outlined the current Area Median Income (AMI) limits for 80% and 120% AMI as $49,600 to $74,400 for a one-person household (https://houstontx.gov/housing/flyers/ami/2022/AMI-22-Final-061522.pdf). These ranges provide context for the type of earning Houston residents may consider "well-paying."

TABLE 2

Most city services were rated as "excellent" by about 20% of Houston residents, but most services were also rated as "poor" or "failing" by 12%–18%.

How well is the city of Houston providing...		Percentage of residents answering ...				
	Mean score	Excellent (5)	Good (4)	Average (3)	Poor (2)	Failing (1)
Water	3.7	21%	40%	26%	10%	2%
Sewer	3.6	18%	39%	29%	11%	2%
Trash pickup	3.6	19%	39%	29%	10%	3%
Recycling pickup	3.2	14%	29%	29%	17%	11%
Fire department services	4.1	37%	43%	18%	2%	0%
Police services	3.5	20%	32%	31%	13%	5%

their race or ethnicity, education level, or age, and was not related to where they lived in the city.

Residents had the most favorable views of the fire department: 37% of Houston residents rated it as "excellent," only 2% rated it as "poor," and no one rated it as failing.

The city service rated the lowest by residents was recycling pickup: 14% rated it as "excellent," but 28% rated it as either "poor" or "failing." Attitudes toward the city's recycling pickup were similar across race, ethnicity and age groups, but it did vary slightly by education level: As education level went up, so too did the percentage of people rating this particular service as "poor" or "failing."

Attitudes about recycling pickup also varied slightly across regions of the city. Three regions had more than one-third of their residents rate recycling as "poor" or "failing": the West University and Museum District region (37%); The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (34%); and the Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City region (34%). In all other regions, over 20% of residents rated recycling pickup as "poor or failing."

Public Spaces and Resources

Houston residents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = failing and 5 = excellent) the condition of their neighborhood's roads, sidewalks, streetlights, parks and libraries (Table 3). Residents gave the highest ratings to public libraries, though public libraries were also the resource that residents most commonly said was not available in their neighborhood. In fact, 1 in 10 Houston residents said their neighborhood did not have a public library. Of those residents with a public library nearby, 18% rated it as "excellent," 35% rated it as "good" and 31% rated it as "average," meaning 17% rated it as "poor" or "failing."

TABLE 3

Residents tended to give higher ratings to public libraries and parks and greenspace, but many see the conditions of their streets and roads as well as sidewalks as either "poor" or "failing."

		Of residents who do have, percentage rating it as...				
	% who do not have	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Failing
Public libraries	13%	18%	35%	31%	13%	4%
Parks and greenspace	3%	17%	32%	29%	16%	6%
Streetlights	<1%	10%	30%	36%	18%	6%
Sidewalks	4%	8%	23%	31%	25%	13%
Streets and roads	<1%	8%	20%	29%	27%	15%

TABLE 4 **The quality and condition of neighborhood parks varied by region, with as many as 1 in 3 residents in some neighborhoods rating them as "poor" or "failing."**

		Of residents who do have, percentage rating ...				
	% who do not have	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Failing
West University and Museum District	3%	22%	30%	24%	16%	8%
Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward	3%	16%	24%	38%	14%	7%
The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	2%	21%	47%	24%	8%	1%
Uptown and Memorial	4%	29%	36%	24%	7%	4%
Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief	1%	17%	38%	25%	14%	5%
Meyerland and Brays Oaks	2%	12%	27%	34%	19%	8%
Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	5%	13%	29%	29%	22%	6%
Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	8%	9%	24%	36%	23%	9%
Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	2%	11%	34%	21%	26%	8%
I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	2%	20%	45%	22%	8%	6%
Humble and Kingwood	1%	16%	27%	32%	17%	8%

The next-highest-rated public resource was parks and greenspace (Table 4). Three percent of residents reported not having any parks or greenspace within their surrounding neighborhood, though this differed by where the resident lived. Nearly 8% of residents in the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region reported not having any parks or greenspace, compared to 1% of residents in the Sharpstown, Chinatown and Alief region and the Humble and Kingwood region. For residents who did have parks and greenspace nearby, 17% rated them as "excellent," 32% rated them as "good" and 29% rated them as "average." Still, the remaining 23%, or about 1 in 4 Houstonians rated their neighborhood's parks and greenspace as either "poor" or "failing." The percentage of residents rating their parks and greenspace as "poor" or "failing" differed by where they lived. Only 14% of residents in the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region; 9% of residents in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region; and 11% of residents in the Uptown and Memorial region rated their neighborhood parks and greenspace as "poor" or "failing." In comparison, about one-third of residents in the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region and the Spring Branch, Fairbanks and Greater Inwood region rated their parks and greenspace as "poor" or "failing."

Streetlights were available in nearly all residents' neighborhoods — less than 1% reported not having them — and while 10% of residents with streetlights rated them as "excellent," around 23% reported theirs were either "poor" or "failing" (Table 5). Differences in the perceived adequacy of streetlights were observed across the city. In The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue region, about 15% of residents rated their streetlights as "poor" or "failing," and 15% of residents in the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region said the same. In contrast, 31% of residents in the Humble and Kingwood region — nearly 1 in 3 members of that community — rated their streetlights as "poor" or "failing." In all other regions, between 19% and 28% of residents rated their streetlights as "poor" or "failing," highlighting a need to address street lighting across the entire city.

Four percent of Houstonians said they did not have sidewalks in their neighborhood, and of those who did, only 8% said they were "excellent" (Table 6). In contrast, 38% of residents rated the quality of their sidewalks as either "poor" or "failing." Almost half of the residents in the West University and Museum District region rated their sidewalks as "poor" or "failing" — the highest of any region in the city. The region with the lowest percentage of residents rating their sidewalks as "poor" or "failing" was the I-10 and State Highway 99

TABLE 5

Neighborhoods' ratings of their streetlights (if they have them) vary by region, with more than 1 in 4 in some neighborhoods rating them as "poor" or "failing."

			Of residents who do have, percentage rating ...				
	% who do not have		Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Failing
West University and Museum District	<1%		4%	35%	36%	20%	6%
Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward	1%		11%	21%	40%	22%	6%
The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	<1%		4%	38%	43%	12%	3%
Uptown and Memorial	<1%		14%	30%	33%	17%	5%
Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief	<1%		8%	32%	34%	21%	5%
Meyerland and Brays Oaks	1%		14%	30%	37%	11%	8%
Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	1%		6%	27%	39%	21%	6%
Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	<1%		12%	20%	46%	19%	4%
Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	<1%		8%	35%	33%	18%	5%
I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	1%		11%	44%	28%	11%	5%
Humble and Kingwood	1%		15%	24%	30%	21%	10%

TABLE 6

On average, about 40% of residents across all regions of the city rated their sidewalks (if they have them) as "poor" or "failing."

			Of residents who do have, percentage rating...				
	% who do not have		Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Failing
West University and Museum District	<1%		3%	25%	23%	31%	18%
Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward	2%		6%	16%	35%	24%	19%
The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	1%		4%	26%	29%	30%	12%
Uptown and Memorial	5%		10%	26%	31%	20%	14%
Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief	1%		4%	22%	31%	27%	16%
Meyerland and Brays Oaks	6%		11%	25%	32%	21%	11%
Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	3%		4%	23%	28%	30%	16%
Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	6%		14%	17%	30%	30%	8%
Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	5%		7%	26%	31%	23%	13%
I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	2%		13%	36%	28%	13%	9%
Humble and Kingwood	5%		13%	14%	39%	27%	7%

TABLE 7 **Over 40% of residents in most regions of the city rated their streets and roads as "poor" or "failing."**

		Of residents who do have, percentage rating ...				
	% who do not have	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Failing
West University and Museum District	<1%	3%	16%	23%	40%	18%
Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward	<1%	5%	14%	35%	30%	17%
The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	<1%	5%	26%	26%	31%	13%
Uptown and Memorial	<1%	12%	23%	26%	23%	16%
Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief	<1%	7%	18%	30%	23%	21%
Meyerland and Brays Oaks	<1%	11%	15%	34%	23%	17%
Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	<1%	5%	20%	30%	32%	13%
Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	<1%	9%	18%	28%	29%	16%
Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	<1%	7%	23%	32%	24%	14%
I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	<1%	16%	34%	26%	17%	7%
Humble and Kingwood	1%	9%	13%	31%	33%	14%

and Far Northwest region at 23%. That's still nearly 1 in 4 residents rating their sidewalks as "poor" or "failing," underscoring the widespread need for pedestrian infrastructure improvements around the city.

Finally, over 42% of Houston residents rated the streets and roads in their neighborhood as "poor" or "failing" (Table 7). At least one-quarter of respondents from each region around the city gave their streets and roads these low marks, but in the West University and Museum District region, almost 60% of residents rated their roads as "poor" or "failing." In contrast, only 24% of residents in the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region rated theirs as such. For all the other regions around the city, between 38% and 47% of residents rated their streets and roads as "poor" or "failing."

Crime and Safety

The most commonly reported "biggest problem" facing the Houston area according to responses on the 2023 Kinder Houston Area Survey was crime and safety, and in the current study, more residents reported being "concerned" or "very concerned" with crime and safety than any other issue. To better understand some of the ways in which crime and safety manifests itself in Houston, residents were asked to reflect on their perceptions and experiences in their neighborhoods and the city using a scale of 1 to 4 (1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree). On average, Houston residents scored a 3.0 about feeling safe walking around their neighborhood during the day — indicating a general feeling of safety (Figure 2). Average scores differed by race and ethnicity, education level and the region of the city where the resident lived. White residents had a higher average score (3.2) than Asian, Black and Hispanic respondents, all of whom had an average score of 2.9. Residents with a Bachelor's degree or higher had a higher average score (3.2) than residents with up to a high school diploma or some college experience (both of whom had an average score of 2.9).

Average scores for feeling safe during the day also varied across the city, with some of the highest average scores in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (3.5) and the Uptown and Memorial region (3.3), compared to the average score for residents in the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region (2.6) and the Humble and Kingwood region (2.7).

When residents were asked how safe they feel walking around their neighborhood at night, on average, Houston residents scored a 2.3, meaning Houstonians typically do not feel safe walking around their neighborhood at night (Figure 2). White residents had the highest average score of 2.5, and Hispanic residents had the lowest average score at 2.2. Additionally, the average score of respondents with a Bachelor's degree or more

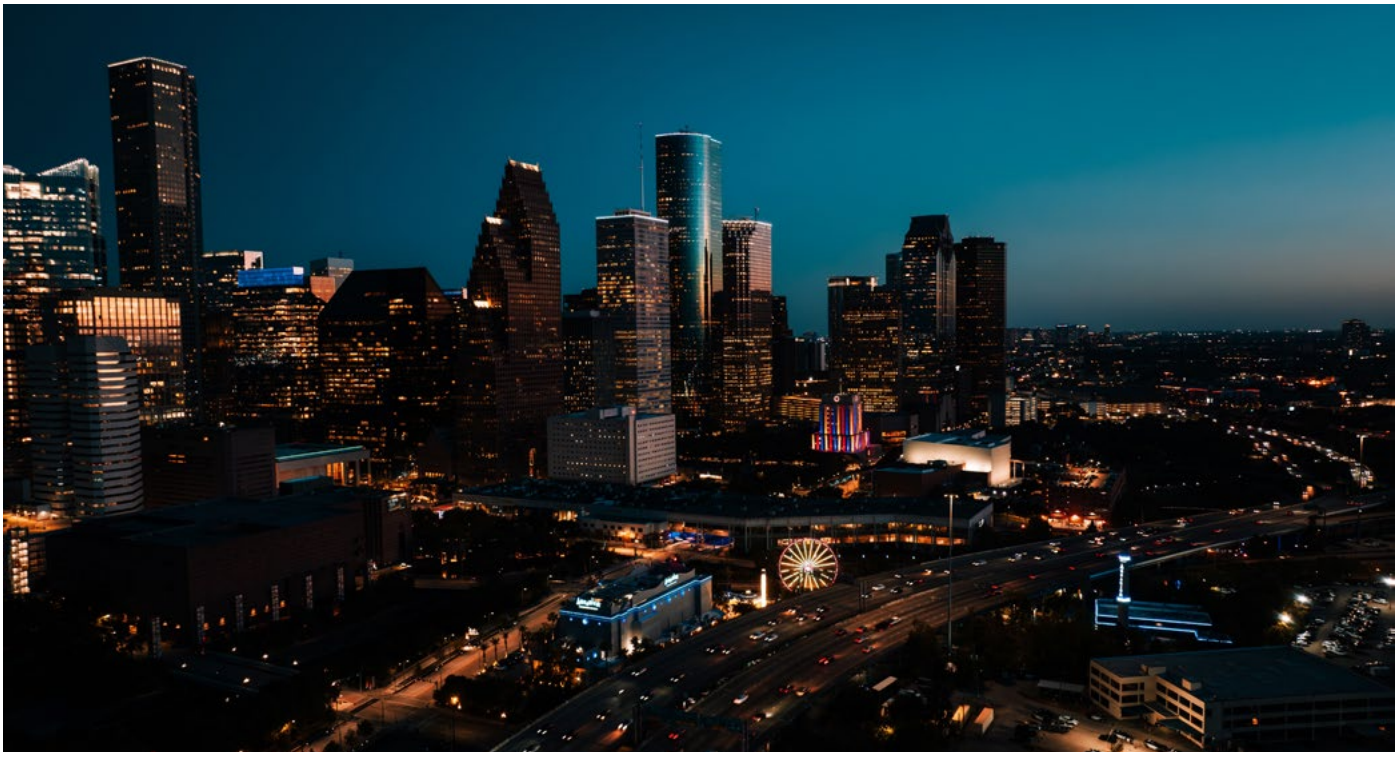


Photo by Jeswin Thomas on Unsplash

(2.5) indicated those residents felt safer walking around at night in their neighborhoods than residents with a high school diploma (2.3) or some college (2.2).

The region of the city where the resident lived also shaped their response to feeling safe walking around at night. Residents in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (2.7) and the Uptown and Memorial region (2.6) had the highest average scores, while residents in the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region (1.9) had the lowest average score.

For all groups of people across all regions of the city, residents reported lower average feelings of safety during the night than during the day. In fact, 58% of all residents scored walking around their neighborhood at night as less safe than walking around their neighborhood during the day. At least half of residents in all regions felt like their neighborhood was less safe at night than during the day, and in some regions around the city about 7 in 10 Houstonians reported feeling less safe at night. More specifically, about 50% of residents in the Meyerland and Brays Oaks region reported feeling less safe at night, while 70% of residents in the West University and Museum District region and in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region reported the same (Figure 3). This transformation of neighborhoods from day to night may be a key source of the concern and unease residents feel about crime and safety in the city.

In an attempt to understand how residents felt about the safety of their neighborhood regardless of time of day, they were asked to indicate if they agreed or disagreed that their neighborhood was a safe place to live. Sixty-nine percent of Houstonians agreed their neighborhood was safe, leaving over 30%, almost 1 in 3, who did not. Perceptions of neighborhood safety differed by race and ethnicity, education level, and region (Figure 4). More specifically, 77% of Asian residents and 75% of White residents reported that their neighborhood was a safe place to live, while only 59% of Black residents and 68% of Hispanic residents said the same. As for differences by education level, 80% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or more felt like they lived in a safe neighborhood compared to 63% of residents with up to a high school diploma and 62% of residents with some college experience.

Residents from around the city have very different impressions of how safe their neighborhood is based on where they are living. The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region and the Uptown and Memorial region each had 9 out of 10 residents agreeing the neighborhood was safe, the highest levels of agreement among all regions. These regions can be contrasted with Humble and Kingwood, where 47% of residents agreed their neighborhood was safe, and in the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region, where 50% of residents agreed their neighborhood was safe.

FIGURE 2 **Houston residents felt their neighborhood was safer to walk around during the day than at night and safer than the city as a whole.**

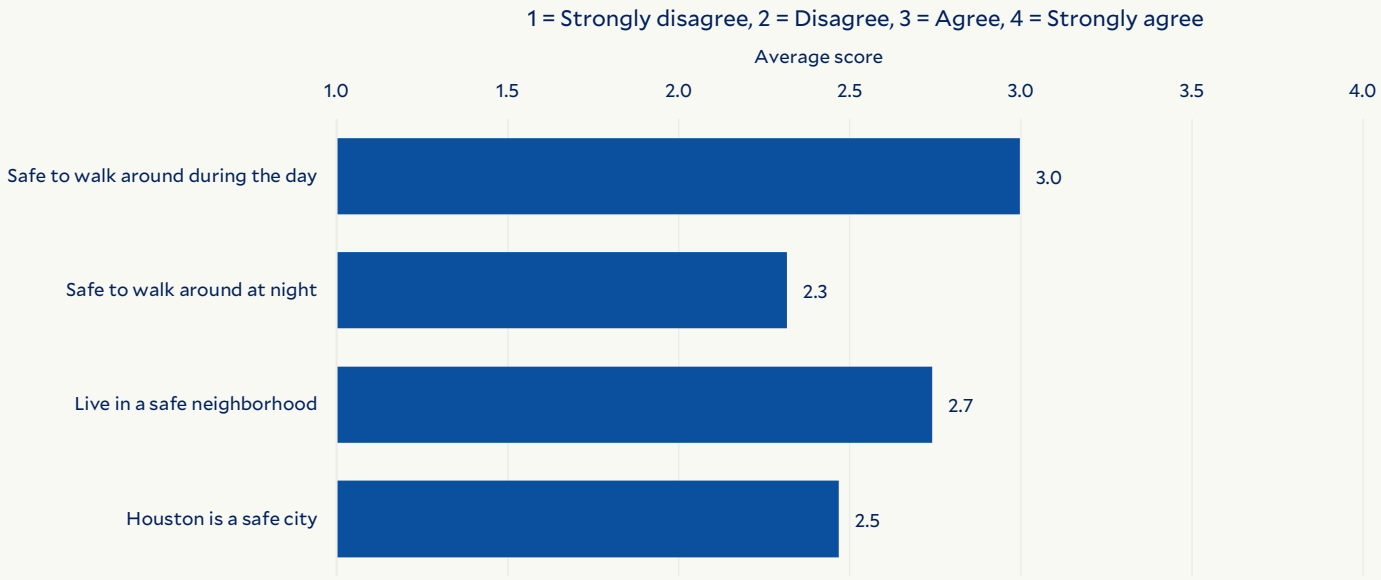


FIGURE 3 **A majority of Houston residents felt their neighborhood was less safe at night than it was during the day across all regions of the city.**

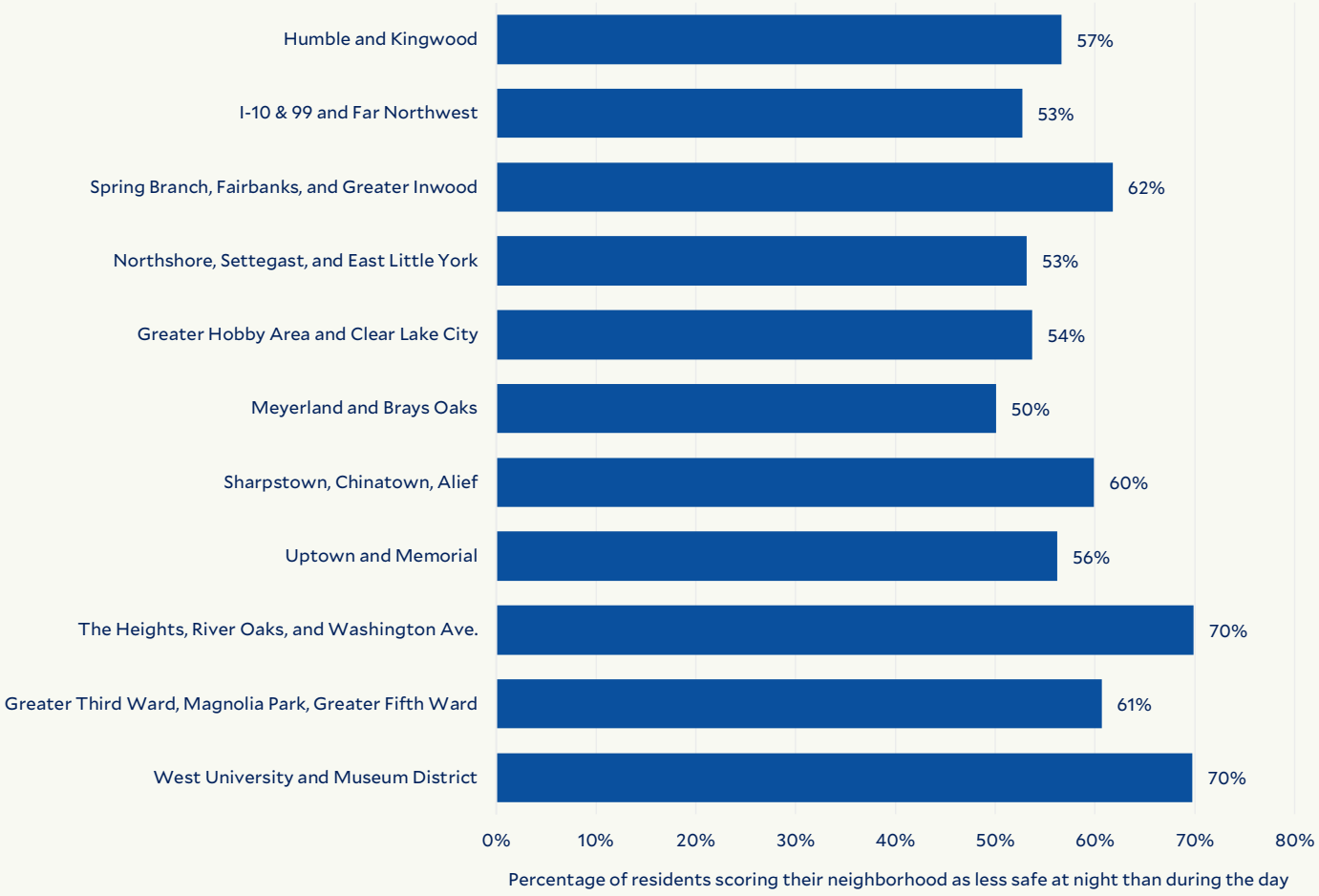


FIGURE 4

The percentage of residents who felt their neighborhood was a safe place to live varied by race and ethnicity, education level, and region of the city where a resident lived.

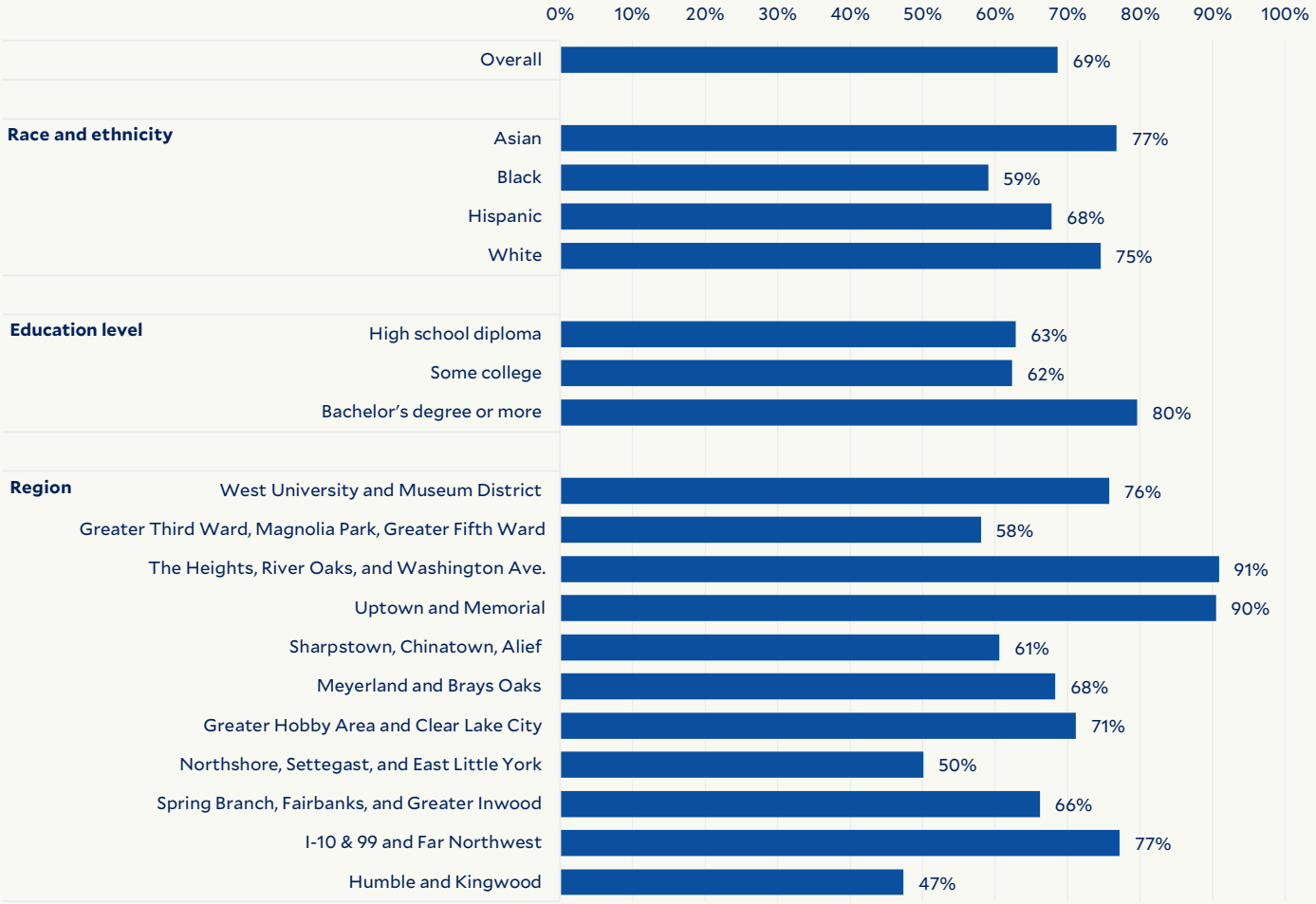
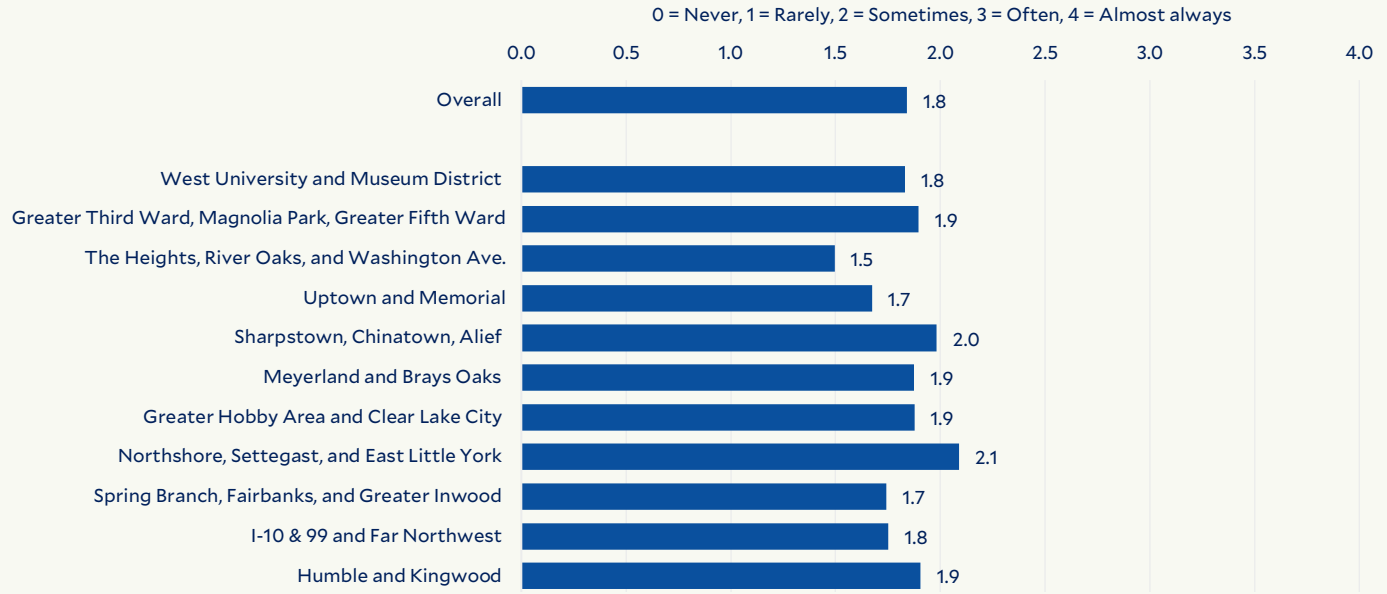


FIGURE 5

On average, Houstonians report they "sometimes" feel unsafe in their day-to-day lives.



Residents were also asked if they felt the city of Houston was a safe place to live: Only half did.

In addition to residents' perceptions of safety in their neighborhoods and the city, they were also asked how often they feel unsafe in their day-to-day lives: never, rarely, sometimes, often or almost always. For this measure, a higher score corresponds to feeling unsafe more often. On average, residents scored a 1.8, which corresponded most closely with a response of "sometimes" feeling unsafe (Figure 5). Differences in how often residents felt unsafe were small across race and ethnicity, education levels and age of residents. Differences by region of the city were much larger, as 1 in 4 residents in the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region, the Sharpstown, Chinatown and Alief region, and the Humble and Kingwood region reported feeling "often" or "almost always" unsafe in their day-to-day lives compared to 1 in 10 residents in The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue region.

Understanding the reasons why residents felt unsafe requires additional study; however, widespread experiences of feeling unsafe were reported across groups of people and areas of the city. In fact, only 6% of residents reported never feeling unsafe, meaning the vast majority of Houstonians — 94% — experience some degree of feeling unsafe in their day-to-day lives.

Environmental Threats and Climate Change

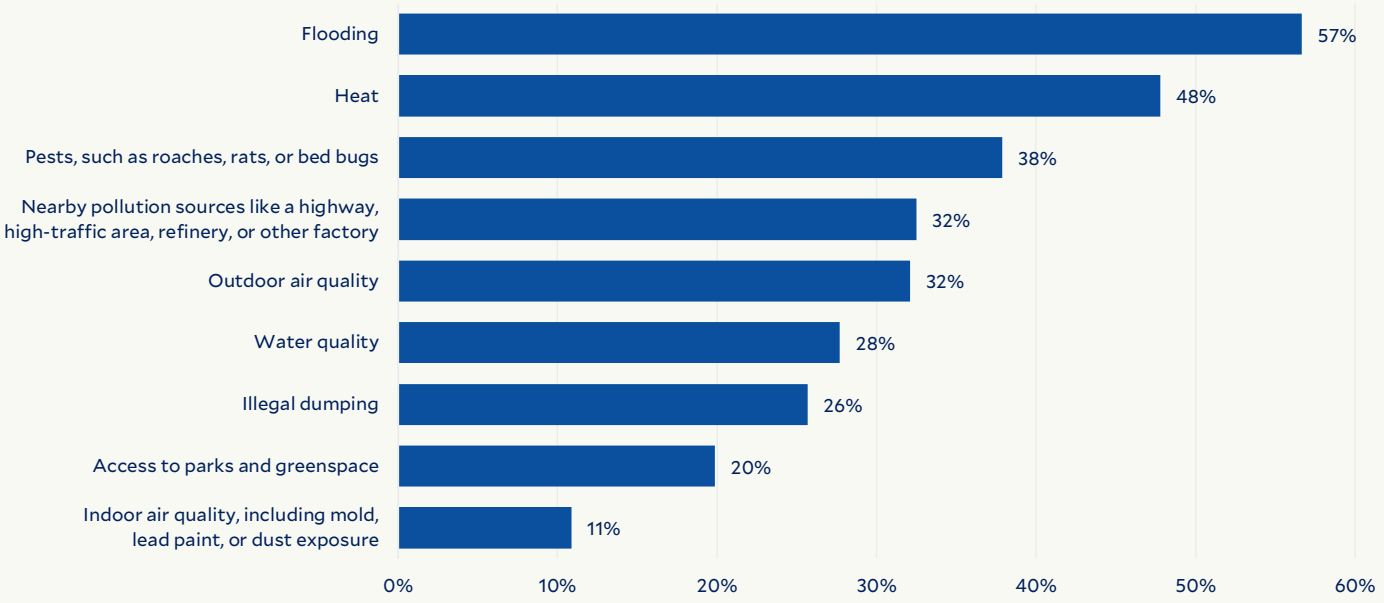
Nearly 60% of Houston residents selected flooding as one of the top environmental issues facing their neighborhood (Figure 6). Flooding was the most commonly selected response, followed by heat (48%) and pests (38%).

Outdoor air quality was selected as one of the top environmental issues facing a neighborhood by about one-third of residents, though this varied by race and ethnicity, education level and age. Specifically, about 46% of White residents selected outdoor air quality as a top environmental issue facing their neighborhood, compared to 28% of Asian residents, 26% of Black residents and 26% of Hispanic residents. About 44% of residents with a Bachelor's degree selected outdoor air quality as a top environmental issue facing their community, compared to 31% of residents with some college experience and 24% of residents with up to a high school diploma. Finally, more older adults (44%) chose outdoor air quality as a top environmental issue facing their community than young adults (27%) and adults aged 30 to 54 years old (29%).

Nearby pollution sources was selected as one of the top environmental issues facing neighborhoods in the city by about one-third of Houston residents. Although this varied slightly across groups, the differences were not substantively meaningful.

Photo by Nils Huenerfuerst on Unsplash

FIGURE 6 **Flooding, heat, and pests were the most commonly selected environmental concerns.**



Water quality was chosen by 28% of residents, illegal dumping was chosen by 26% of residents, and access to parks and greenspace was chosen by 20% of residents as one of the main environmental challenges facing their neighborhood. Indoor air quality related to mold, lead paint or dust exposure was the option chosen least often by residents, but even still, about 1 in 10 Houstonians selected it.

Looking at the most commonly selected environmental issues facing neighborhoods in Houston, flood and heat appeared among the top three choices of residents in all 11 regions except one (Exhibit 1). The top three environmental issues picked by residents in the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region did not include heat — for them, it was the fourth most common. Houstonians collectively recognize the threat posed to them, their neighborhood and the city by flooding and heat.

Beyond flooding and heat, the environmental issues most commonly identified in different regions of the city varied between concerns with outdoor air quality, nearby pollution sources, water quality, and pests. Outdoor air quality was one of the top three environmental issues identified by residents in the West University and Museum District region and The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue region. Nearby pollution sources was one of the top three environmental issues identified by residents in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward region and the Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City region. Water quality was one of the top three environmental issues identified by residents in the Uptown and Memorial region and the Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood region. In all other regions — the Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief region; the Meyerland and Brays Oaks region; the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region; the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region; and the Humble and Kingwood region — residents identified pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs, as one of their top three environmental issues.

The most commonly identified environmental issues facing residents in the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region included one issue not identified in the top three of any other region: illegal dumping. Flooding was the most commonly identified environmental issue facing the neighborhood, but the second most commonly selected issue was illegal dumping. Nearly 50% of residents in the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region picked illegal dumping as one of the biggest environmental issues facing their neighborhood. After the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region, illegal dumping was most commonly identified in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region and the Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood region where about one-third of residents selected it.

Nearby pollution sources was chosen by at least 20% of residents in all 11 regions, and was one of the top three environmental issues selected by residents in

EXHIBIT 1 **Flooding or heat was the most commonly selected environmental issue facing neighborhoods in every region of the city.**

Region	Most common issue	Second most common	Third most common
West University and Museum District	Flooding	Heat	Outdoor air quality
Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward	Heat	Nearby pollution sources like a highway, high-traffic area, refinery, or other factory	Flooding
The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue	Flooding	Outdoor air quality	Heat
Uptown and Memorial	Flooding	Heat	Water quality
Sharpstown, Chinatown, Alief	Heat	Pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs	Flooding
Meyerland and Brays Oaks	Flooding	Pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs	Heat
Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City	Flooding	Heat	Nearby pollution sources like a highway, high-traffic area, refinery, or other factory
Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York	Flooding	Illegal dumping	Pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs
Spring Branch, Fairbanks, and Greater Inwood	Flooding	Heat	Water quality
I-10 & 99 and Far Northwest	Heat	Pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs	Flooding
Humble and Kingwood	Flooding	Heat	Pests, such as roaches, rats, or bed bugs

the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region and the Greater Hobby Area and Clear Lake City region. Each of these regions is home to over 30 Toxics Release Inventory (TRI) facilities.[3] Additionally, neighborhoods in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, Greater Fifth Ward region have a history of environmental issues related to industrial activities, including from the Union Pacific railyard[4] that runs through them. Both of these regions are also the ones located nearest the Houston Ship Channel, where a high concentration of heavy industrial activity takes place.

Outdoor air quality was selected as a top environmental issue by at least 15% of residents in all regions and around 50% of residents in the West University and Museum District region and The Heights, River Oaks, and Washington Avenue region. In those same two regions, more than 40% of residents also identified nearby pollution sources as a top concern, further pointing to a heightened concern with air quality by residents in these areas. The source of this concern may have a different origin than the concern from the eastern regions of the city, because there are just four TRI facilities in the West University and Museum District region and three in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region. Instead, both of these regions' outdoor air quality concerns may stem from being encircled by major highways, like I-610, I-10, I-59, I-45 and U.S. 288.

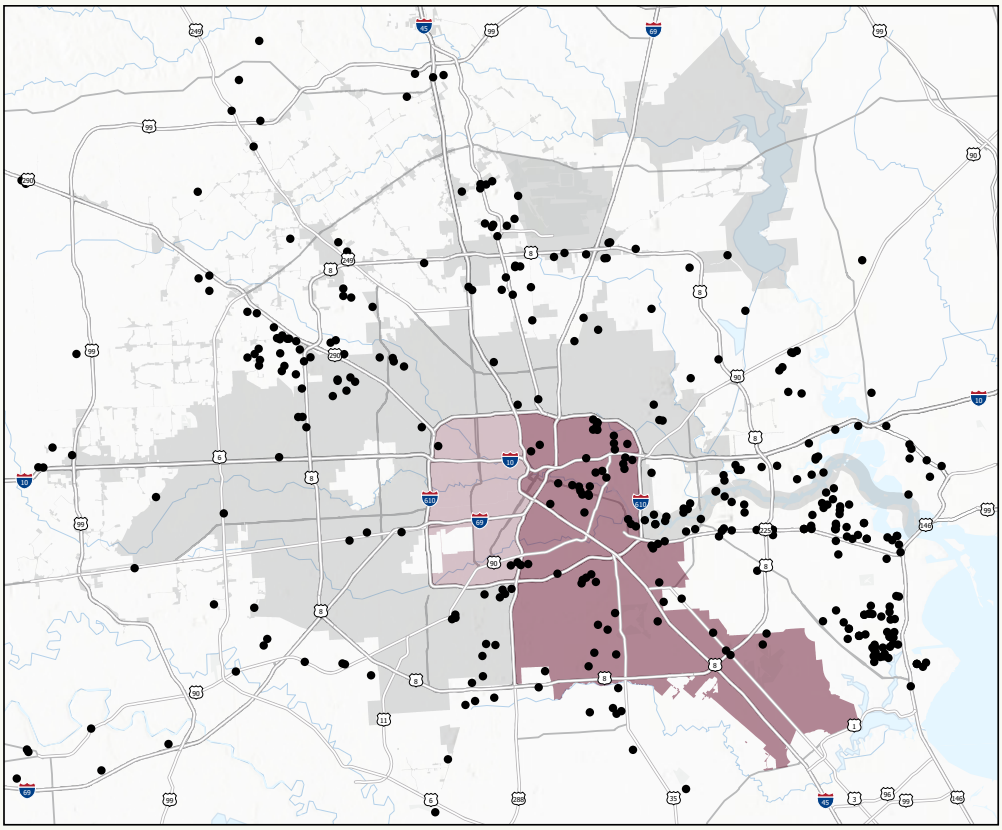
Calling out specific regions of the city where residents more commonly expressed concern with outdoor air quality and nearby pollution sources does not mean air quality in the rest of the city is fine. Houston does not have natural geological features, like hills or val-

3 Environmental Protection Agency. (2023). 2022 TRI Preliminary Dataset: Basic Data Files. https://www.epa.gov/toxics-release-inventory-tri-program/2022-tri-preliminary-dataset-basic-data-files

4 Lozano, J. A. (2023, July 13). Houston to spend millions to relocate residents living near Polluted Union Pacific Rail Yard. AP News. https://apnews.com/article/houston-relocates-residents-polluted-neighborhood-cancer-04adf611697ab3f5d0ef9dd0e9070394

FIGURE 7

Toxics Release Inventory locations and regions identifying "nearby pollution sources" as a top 3 concern



Major environmental concern of region

- TRI sites that reported one or more releases in 2022
- Outdoor Air Quality
- Nearby Pollution Sources
- Other Environmental Concern

Source: Toxics Release Inventory/Environmental Protection Agency, 2022

FIGURE 8

While the majority of Houstonians feel the city is better prepared and will be more resilient to future storms, about 4 in 10 do not.

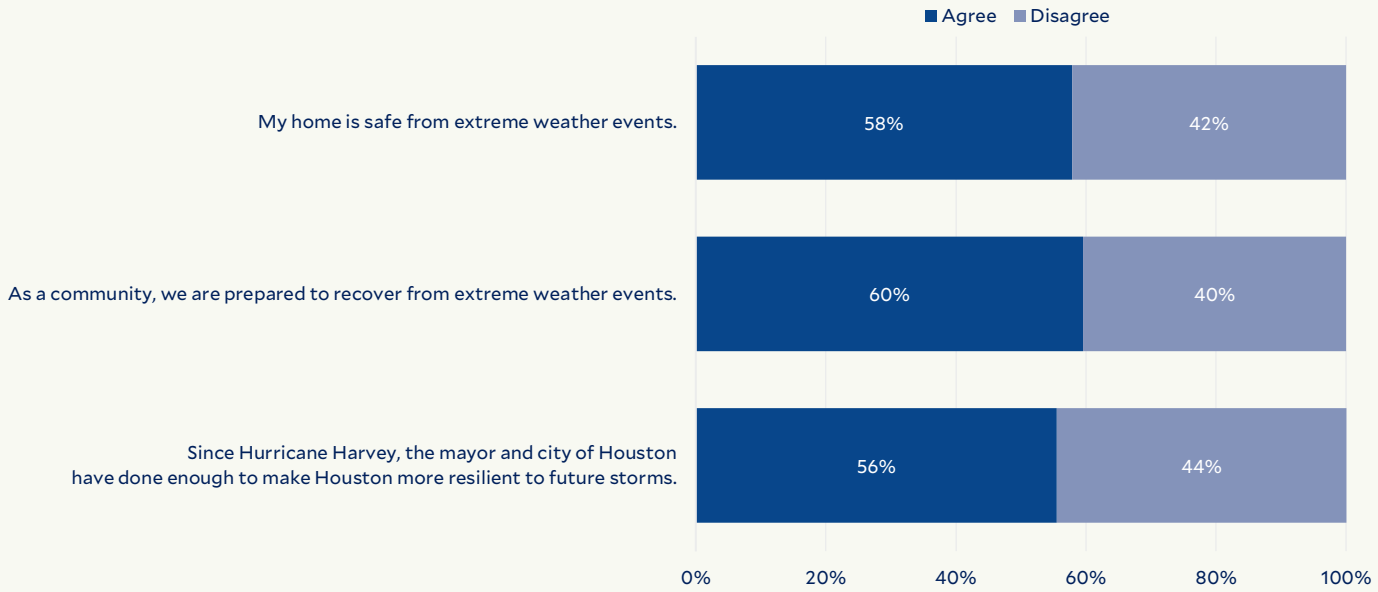


Photo by Alisa Matthews on Unsplash

leys, that significantly disrupt air flow across the city. As such, residents are universally exposed to similar quality air across the city, and that air contains more cancerous toxins than the air breathed in by 88% of the rest of the country.[5] Proximity to TRI facilities and major highways may put air quality and nearby pollution sources on the forefront of certain people's thinking more than others, but it alone does not determine nor protect against exposure to the poorer air quality that plagues the entire Houston area.

Houston's location along the Gulf Coast means the city is also not protected against major weather events, such as Hurricane Harvey in 2017 and Tropical Storm Imelda in 2019. Following Hurricane Harvey, billions of dollars were spent in the city and surrounding counties to help families and communities recover from the storm, and make the area more resilient to future extreme weather and flooding. The billions in spending have resulted in the majority of Houston residents feeling like the city has been made more resilient to future storms. Specifically, 56% feel enough has been done since Harvey to make the city more resilient to future storms, 60% feel that as a community the city is ready to recover from extreme weather events, and 58% feel their home is safe from extreme weather events (Figure 8).

While these numbers offer evidence of a city feeling prepared, they also show uncertainty: 44% of residents do not feel enough has been done to prepare the city for the next major storm, 40% do not feel their community is ready to recover, and 42% do not feel their home is safe.

Unpacking these numbers further to more fully understand the uncertainty around preparedness for the next extreme weather event, only 9% of respondents strongly agreed that the city has done enough to make Houston more resilient for future storms, and an equal proportion strongly disagreed with that claim. The other 82% of residents were split across the middle two categories (i.e., "agree" and "disagree"). Similarly, only 12% of residents said they strongly agreed and 9% said they strongly disagreed that the community was prepared to recover from extreme weather events. When asked about their own home, 10% strongly agreed it was safe from extreme weather events, and 8% strongly disagreed. Having so few residents at the extremes and so many in the middle — 80% — suggests a city not divided about its preparedness, but uncertain of it.

Understanding why residents are uncertain about the city's preparedness for and ability to recover from future storms requires more data than was collected as part of this study. The uncertainty could stem from residents wanting to see more action from the city to improve drainage systems. It may also be indicative of

5 City of Houston. (2023). One Complete Houston. https://houstontx.gov/onecompletehouston

residents not knowing what progress has been made, such that efforts to educate and inform the public about what's been done could go a long way to addressing feelings of uncertainty. Regardless of the reason why, the middling responses from many residents in Houston suggests a good deal of unease around this perennial threat faced by the city.

Housing Costs and Gentrification

Nearly half of all Houston residents reported they were "often" or "almost always" worried they wouldn't be able to keep up with their bills (Figure 9). Another quarter of residents said they were "sometimes" worried about keeping up with their bills. Many residents also expressed worry about paying their mortgage or rent on time: Almost 40% reported they were "often" or "almost always" worried about making the monthly payment that keeps a roof over their head. One-quarter were "often" or "almost always" worried they would have to move because they couldn't keep up with the mortgage or rent payments. Fifteen percent reported they were "often" or "almost always" worried about being evicted or foreclosed on. Many Houstonians are worried about housing costs, and the general costs of making ends meet, but this worry is not uniformly shared across the city.

More Black residents (57%) and Hispanic residents (49%) than Asian residents (35%) and White residents (35%) reported being worried about paying their bills "often" or "almost always" (Figure 10). This worry was also more commonly reported by residents with up to a high school diploma (55%) or some college experience (54%) than residents with a Bachelor's degree or more (28%). Particularly relevant for the cost of housing, homeownership status was also related to worry about paying the bills: 33% of homeowners reported being "often" or "almost always" worried, compared to 58% of renters. Worry about paying the bills also varied across the city, with only 27% of residents in The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region indicating they were "often" or "almost always" worried, compared to 60% of residents in the Humble and Kingwood region and 54% of residents in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region.

Turning to residents' worry about being able to pay for their housing, similar patterns emerged by race and ethnicity and education level as were seen for worry about paying the bills. Age of resident, which had not been meaningfully related to worry about paying the bills, was related to worry about paying for housing. About 40% of young adults and 43% of adults ages 30-54 years old reported being "often" or "almost always"

FIGURE 9

Nearly half of Houstonians report they often or almost always worry about keeping up with their bills, and 1 in 6 are "often" or "almost always" worried they will face eviction or foreclosure.

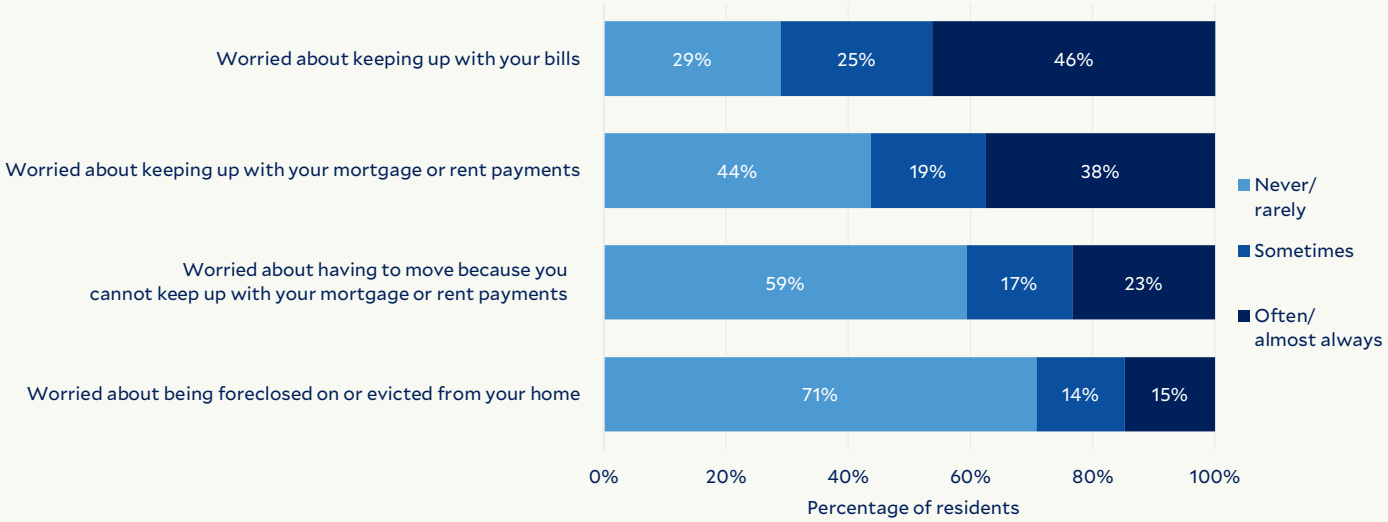


FIGURE 10

Nearly half of all Houstonians were "often" or "almost always" worried about being able to pay their bills.

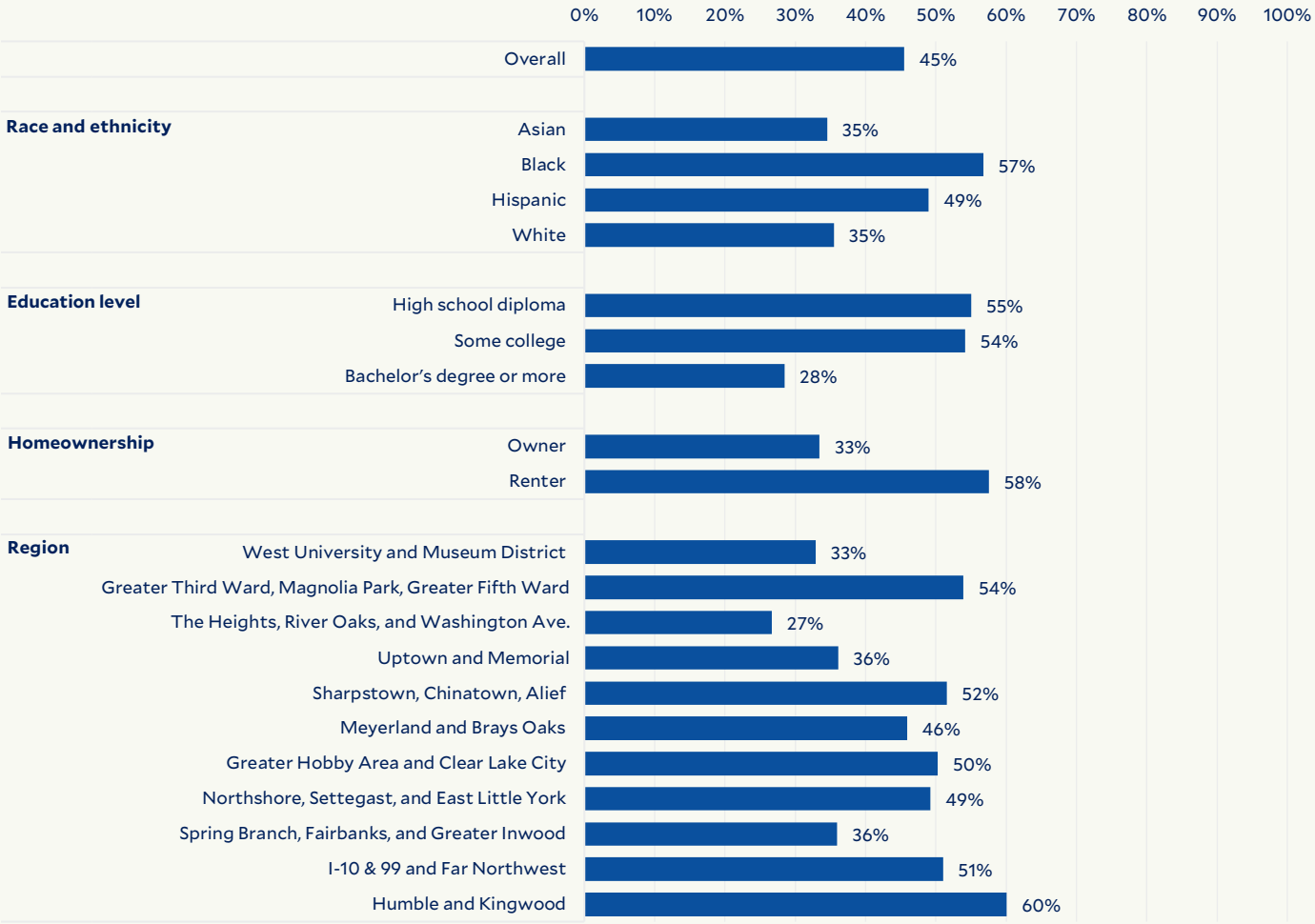
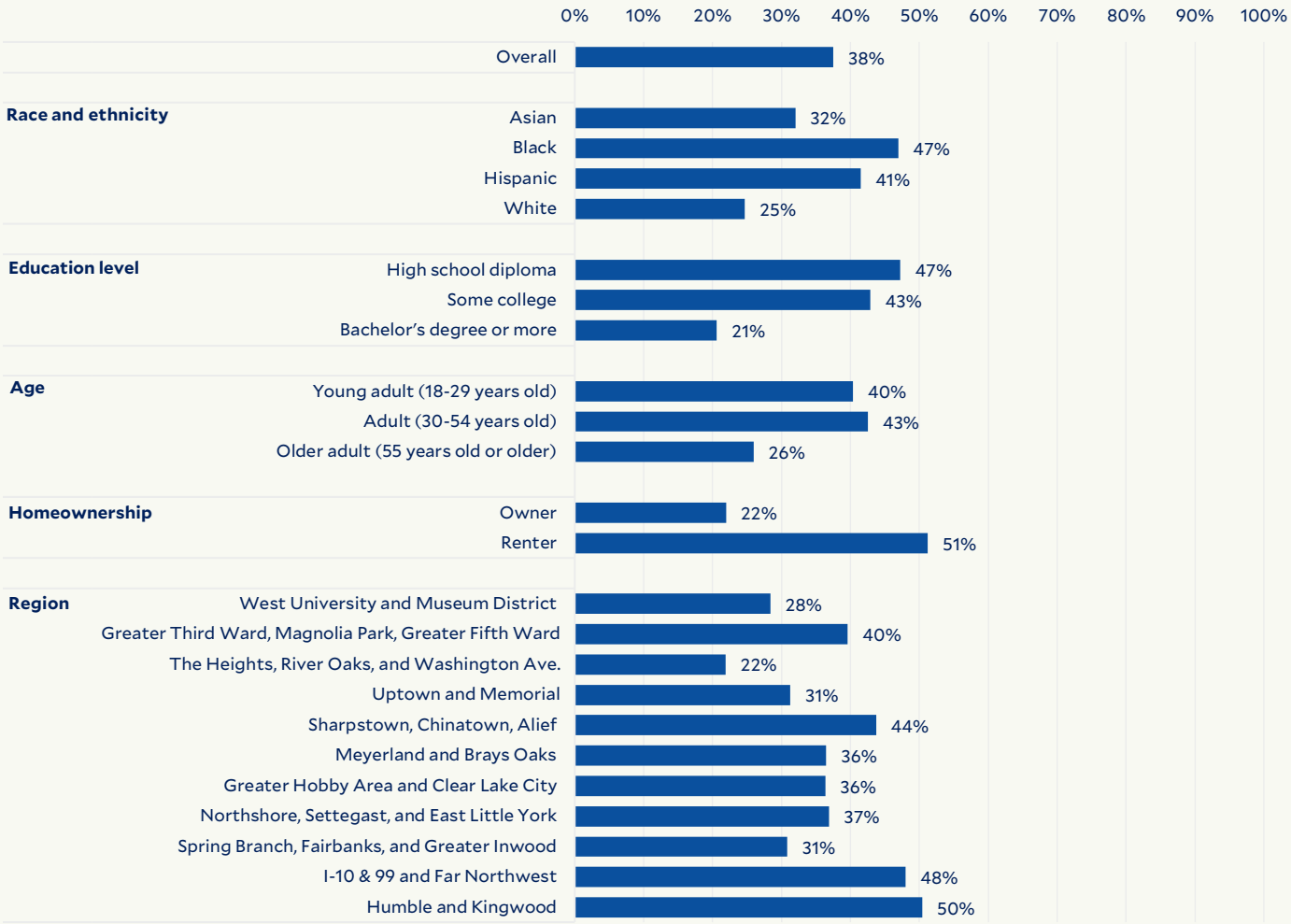


FIGURE 11 **Almost 40% of Houstonians were worried about being able to pay for their housing.**



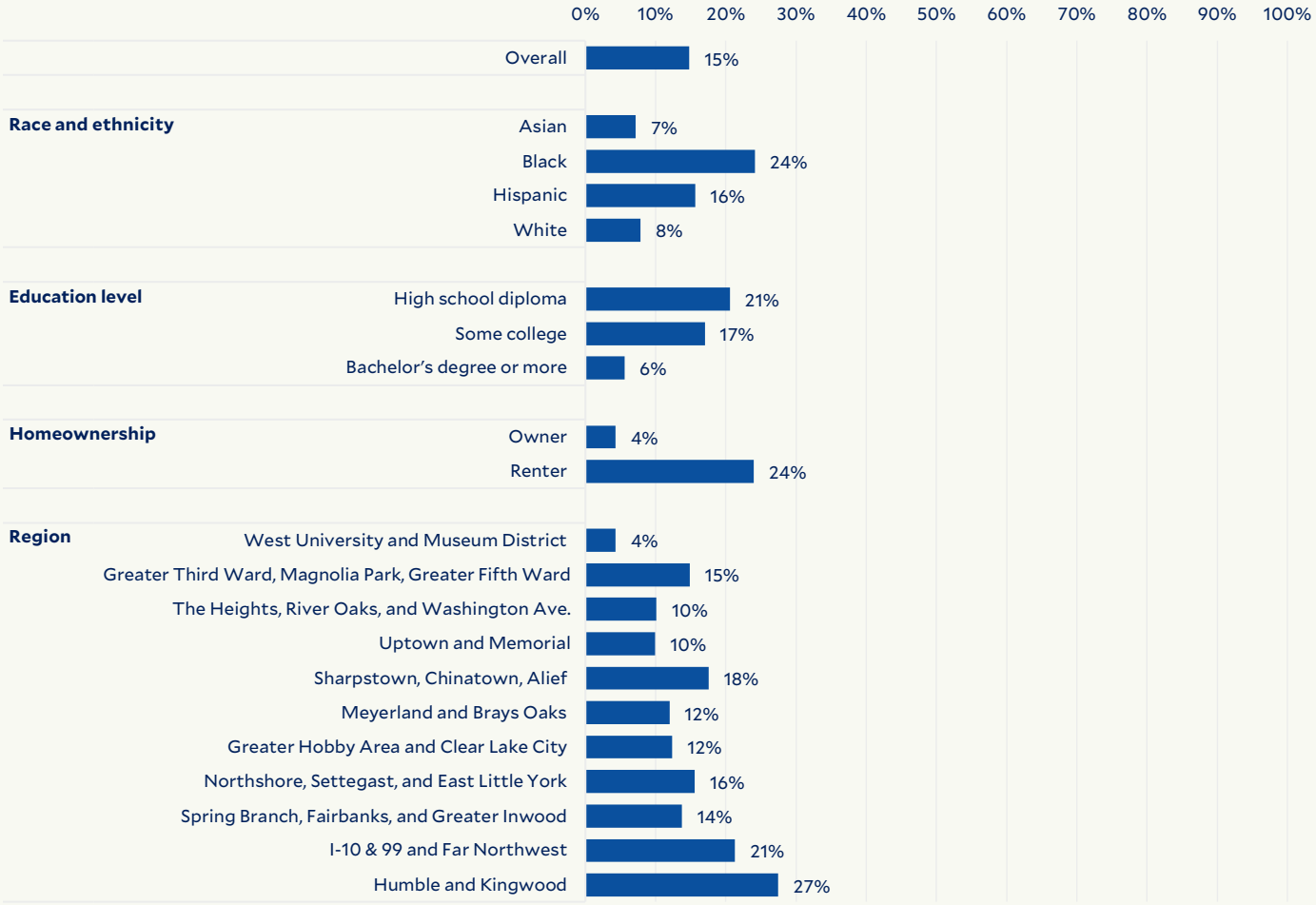
worried they would not be able to pay for their housing, compared to 26% of older adults (Figure 11).

The only group with more than half reporting "often" or "almost always" being worried about paying for housing was renters at about 51%, compared to 22% of homeowners. While this 30-percentage-point difference is large, the overall number of worried homeowners still translates to 1 in 5.

Worry about being able to pay for housing differed across regions of the city as well and closely followed the pattern of worry about paying bills. Half of residents in the Humble and Kingwood region said they were "often" or "almost always" worried about paying for their housing, with similarly high levels of worry from residents in the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region (48%) and the Sharpstown, Chinatown and Alief region (44%). Regions where the fewest residents reported being worried about paying for housing were The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (22%) and the West University and Museum District region (28%). Similar to the renter-homeowner comparison, while there is a 20-plus percentage point difference between regions of the city, even the "best" region still had 1 in 5 residents reporting that they were "often" or "almost always" concerned they wouldn't be able to pay for their housing.

While residents' worry about being able to pay for their housing was a relatively frequent occurrence in Houston, less often were residents worried they would be evicted or foreclosed on; however, this is not to say it was a rare occurrence, particularly for certain groups in the city. Nearly one-quarter of Black residents reported that they worried "often" or "almost always" about being evicted or foreclosed on, compared to 16% of Hispanic residents, 8% of White residents and 7% of Asian residents (Figure 12). By education level, 21% of residents with up to a high school diploma and 17% of

FIGURE 12 **One-quarter of Black residents and one-quarter of renters in the city reported "often" or "almost always" worrying about eviction or foreclosure.**



residents with some college experience worried about being evicted or foreclosed on, compared to 6% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or more. Similar to the patterns documented above between homeowners and renters, 1 in 4 renters reported being worried about getting evicted compared to 1 in 25 homeowners who were worried about being foreclosed on.

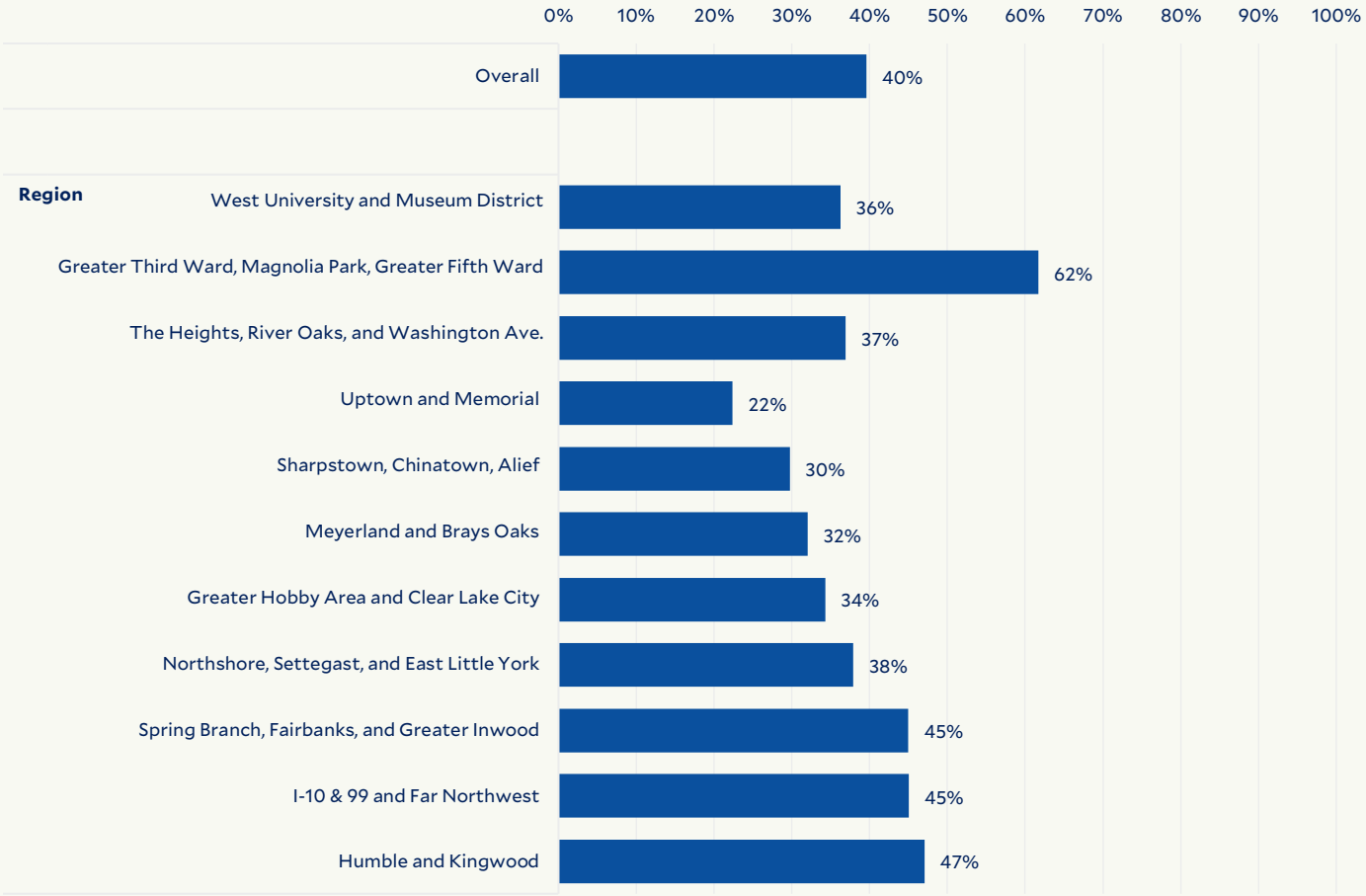
The different levels of worry across groups of people in Houston speak to the different lived experiences that often define communities around the city, which is further evidenced by the differences across regions. Around 27% of residents in the Humble and Kingwood region and 21% of residents in the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region reported worrying about being evicted or foreclosed on "often" or "almost always," compared to only 4% in the West University and Museum District region and 10% in both The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region and the Uptown and Memorial region.

The level of worry Houston residents feel about paying their bills and keeping a roof over their head may, in large part, reflect the documented changes[6] in the cost of housing and other essential goods in the Houston area over the last several years. Houston continues to be a destination city for many around the country and the world, and the last several years has seen significant development move into areas of the city that historically had experienced disinvestment or underinvestment.[7] Optimistically, new development has the potential to reinvigorate neighborhoods, but it could also have the

6 Sherman, S., Potter, D., Kim, A., & Tobin, A. (2023). "The 2023 State of Housing in Harris County and Houston."Houston, TX: Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University. doi.org/10.25611/6XPV-3115

7 Welch, M. (2021, Sept. 17). These Houston Neighborhoods are changing through gentrification. Here's a look at their past and present. Houston Chronicle. https://www.houstonchronicle.com/projects/2021/visuals/houston-evolving-neighborhoods-gentrification-census/

FIGURE 13 **Significantly more residents in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region were concerned with the increasing cost of living in the neighborhood than residents in other regions of the city.**



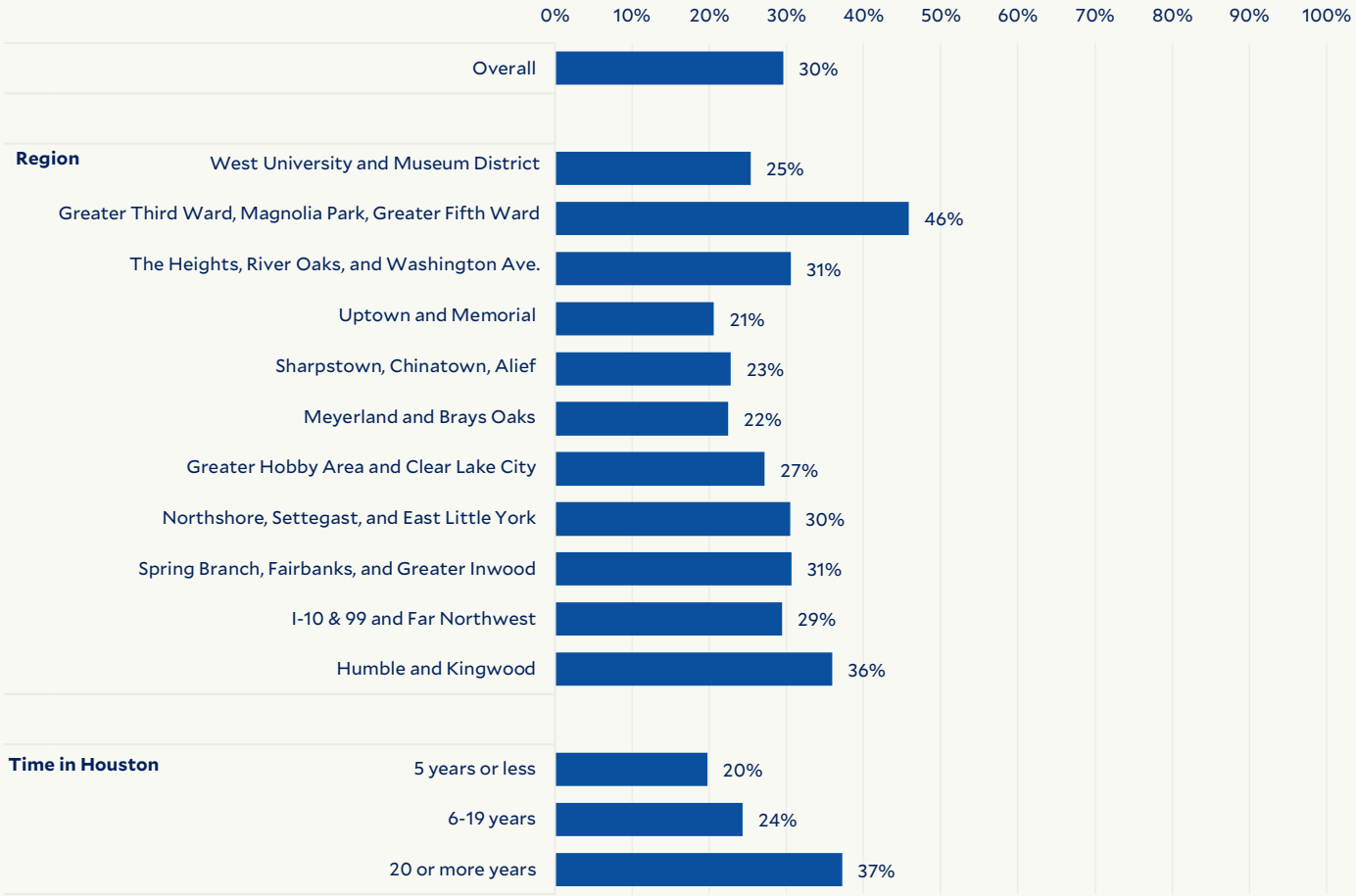
effect of increased housing costs and displacement of longtime residents. Many Houstonians worry about new development in their neighborhood, and overall, about 40% of residents reported they "often" or "almost always" worried it was making their neighborhood more expensive. That number was relatively consistent across race and ethnic group, education level and age group; however, it differed markedly across regions of the city.

Over 60% of residents in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region reported being worried "often" or "almost always" that development was making their neighborhood more expensive (Figure 13). That region's level of worry was 15 percentage points higher than the next highest region — the Humble and Kingwood region at 47%. The region where the fewest residents expressed worry about rising costs in the neighborhood related to development was the Uptown and Memorial region, where 22% of residents reported being "often" or "almost always" concerned. The two regions at the opposite ends of worry about development leading to higher costs are perhaps not surprising given prior research[8] that showed neighborhoods in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region experienced high rates of gentrification, while the Uptown and Memorial area was uniquely situated as relatively immune to gentrification.

In general, fewer residents were worried about the character of their neighborhood changing because of development than were worried it was becoming more expensive. About 30% of Houstonians said they were worried "often" or "almost always" about new development changing the character of their neighborhood.

8 Park, J., Guajardo, L., Shelton, K., Sherman, S. & Fulton, W. (2021). "Re-Taking Stock: Understanding How Trends in the Housing Stock and Gentrification are connected in Houston and Harris County." Houston, TX: Kinder Institute for Urban Research, Rice University. doi.org/10.25611/MHBK-WQ06

FIGURE 14 **Residents in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region and those who have lived in Houston longer more often expressed being concerned about new development changing the character of their neighborhood.**



This was relatively consistent across race and ethnic groups, education levels and age groups. Homeowners and renters also shared similar levels of concern about development changing the character of their neighborhoods. Despite these patterns, levels of worry differed by region. The Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region had the highest level, with almost half of residents (46%) saying they were "often" or "almost always" concerned with new development changing the character of their neighborhood (Figure 14). The level of worry expressed by residents in this region was 10 percentage points higher than the next highest region: the Humble and Kingwood region at 36%. The lowest levels of worry came from residents in the Uptown and Memorial region (21%), the Meyerland and Brays Oaks region (22%) and the Sharpstown, Chinatown and Alief region (23%).

In addition to the gentrification taking place in the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region, residents' high levels of worry about it becoming more expensive and changing its character may reflect how long they have lived there. About 68% of survey respondents from the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park, and Greater Fifth Ward region have lived in Houston for 20 years or longer, and how long a resident has lived in Houston was related to being worried about the changing character of a neighborhood. Across the city, nearly 40% of residents who had lived in Houston for 20 years or longer said they were worried about new development changing the character of their neighborhood, compared to just 20% of residents who had lived in the Houston area for 5 years or less.

Top Priorities for Houston's Next Mayor

Residents' top 3 priorities for Houston's next mayor were: 1) reduce crime, 2) improve physical infrastructure and 3) make housing more affordable (Figure 15).

Reduce Crime

Overall, 81% of Houston residents said it was "very important" for the next mayor to reduce crime. While this number varied across groups and regions of the city, it remained consistently high. For instance, 90% of Black residents said it was very important for the next mayor to do something to reduce crime, the highest share among all race and ethnic groups. White residents had the lowest percentage saying it was very important, yet even that number was 73%. Three-quarters of Asian residents said it was "very important" for the next mayor to reduce crime, as did 83% of Hispanic residents.

Looking across age groups, young adults had a lower percentage — 70% — saying it was "very important" for the next mayor to do something to reduce crime, compared to 84% of adults aged 30 to 54 years old and 87% of older adults (Figure 16).

The percentage of residents saying it was "very important" to do something to reduce crime was also high across all regions throughout the city. The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region was the only one to have less than 70% saying it was "very important" to reduce crime, with 63%. The Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region had the highest percentage of residents (94%) saying it was "very important" to reduce crime. The 30-percentage-point difference between regions is large, but of the remaining nine regions, three of them were 70% or higher, and the other six were over 80%.

FIGURE 15 **The top 3 priorities that residents identified for the next mayor were to reduce crime, improve the physical infrastructure, and make housing more affordable.**

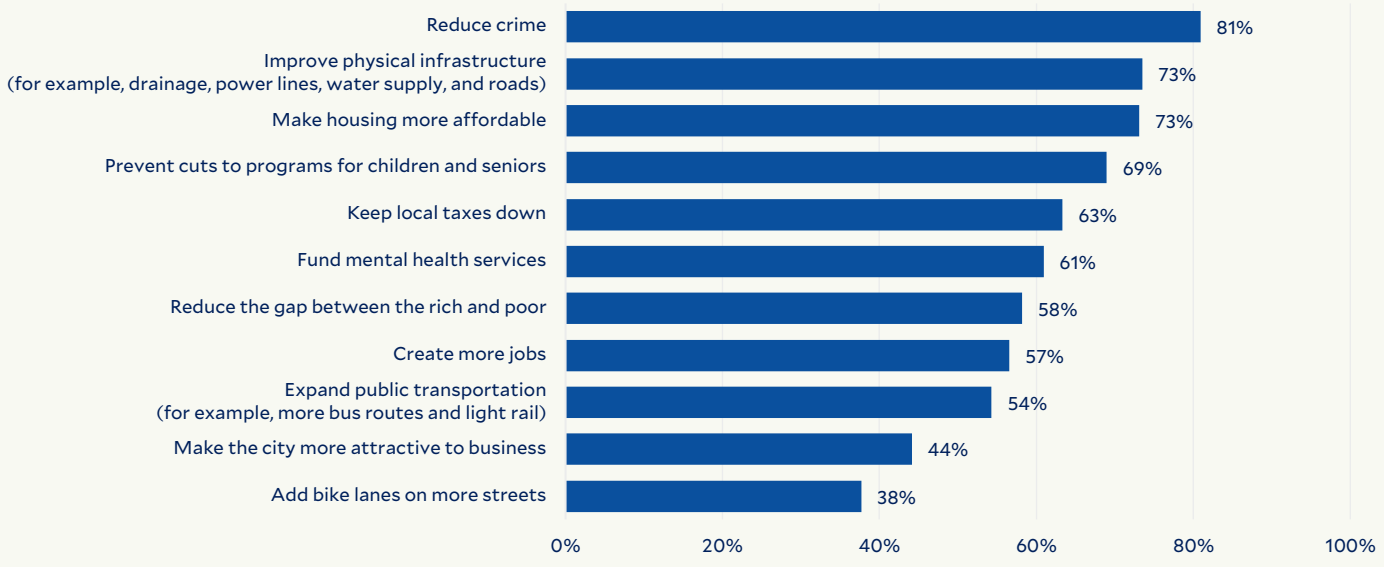
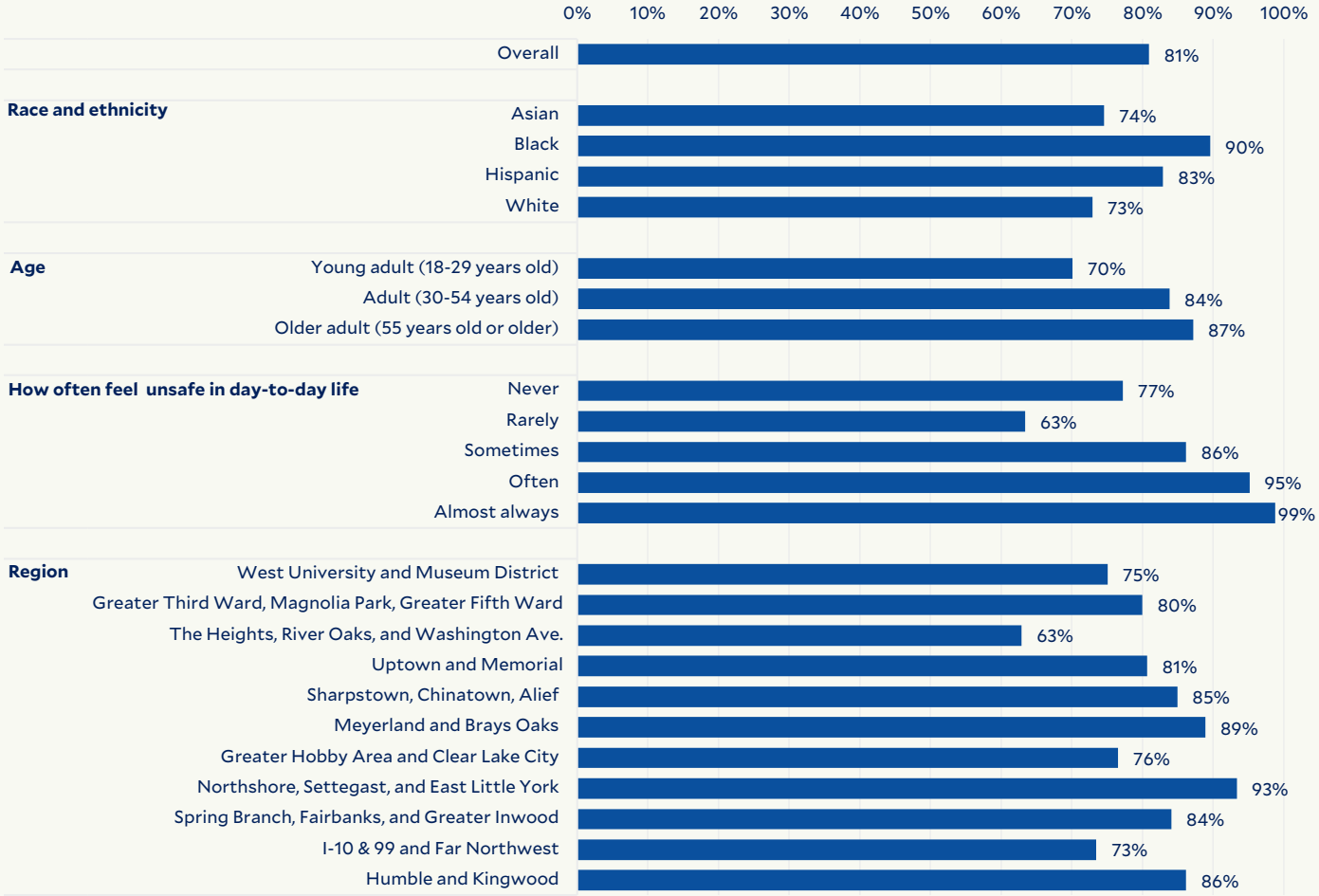


FIGURE 16 **Over 80% of Houstonians think it is "very important" for the next mayor to reduce crime.**



Even with widespread consensus across groups of people and areas of the city that the next mayor needs to do something to make Houston a safer place to live, that message was particularly strong from residents who reported feeling unsafe in their day-to-day lives. Having the next mayor do something to reduce crime was "very important" to 86% of residents who reported sometimes feeling unsafe, 95% of residents who reported often feeling unsafe, and 99% of residents who almost always felt unsafe. Residents whose current circumstances do not afford them the basic necessity of safety and security lead the call for a mayor who will make reducing crime a top and immediate priority.

Residents across the city very clearly issued a mandate for the next mayor to make the city safer, but were less clear on the exact policies to use. When asked if they thought Houston needed a mayor who would enact "tough on crime" policies, 61% of Houstonians said they "strongly agreed." When asked if they thought Houston needed a mayor who would make the city safer by improving funding to mental health services and community policing, 67% of Houstonians said they "strongly agreed." Looking at responses to these two items together, 47% said they "strongly agreed" with both policy positions, and 18% did not "strongly agree" with either approach to reducing crime (Figure 17).

Of residents expressing support for one policy but not the other, about 14% of residents "strongly agreed" the next mayor should use tough-on-crime policies and did not express the same level of support for community policing. More than 21% of Asian residents and 19% of White residents belonged to this group, compared with only 7% of Black residents and 13% of Hispanic residents. Across education levels, 19% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or more expressed support only for tough-on-crime policies — the highest percentage across education levels — compared to 15% of residents with some college experience and 10% of residents who had up to a high school diploma (Figure 18).

FIGURE 17

Nearly half of Houstonians agreed the next mayor should use "tough on crime" and "community policing" policies to reduce crime; almost 1 in 5 Houstonians did not support either.

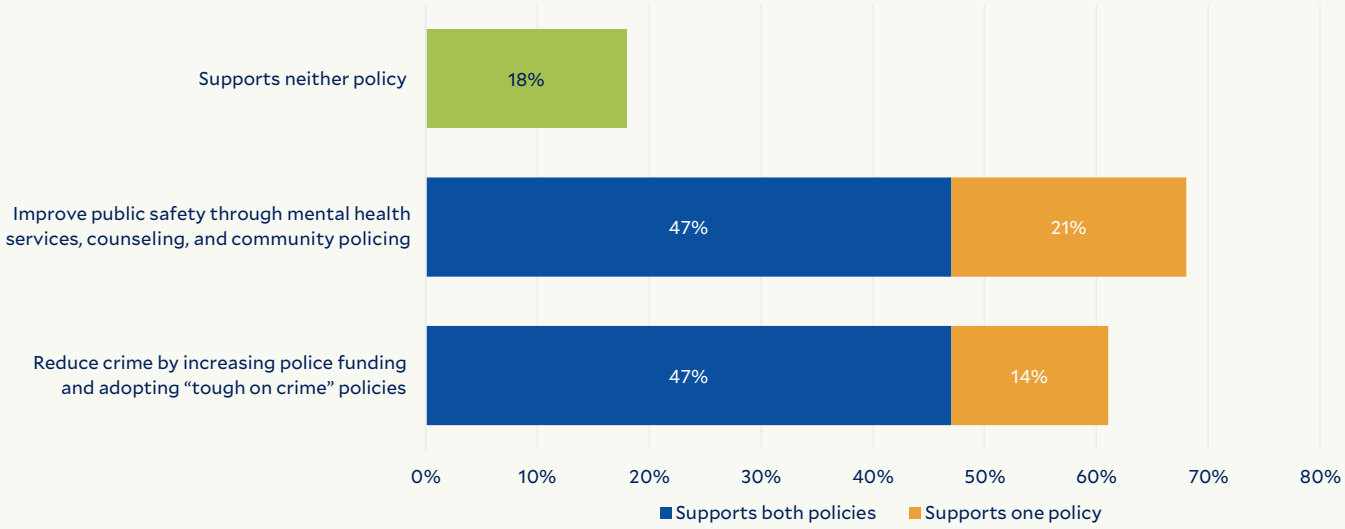
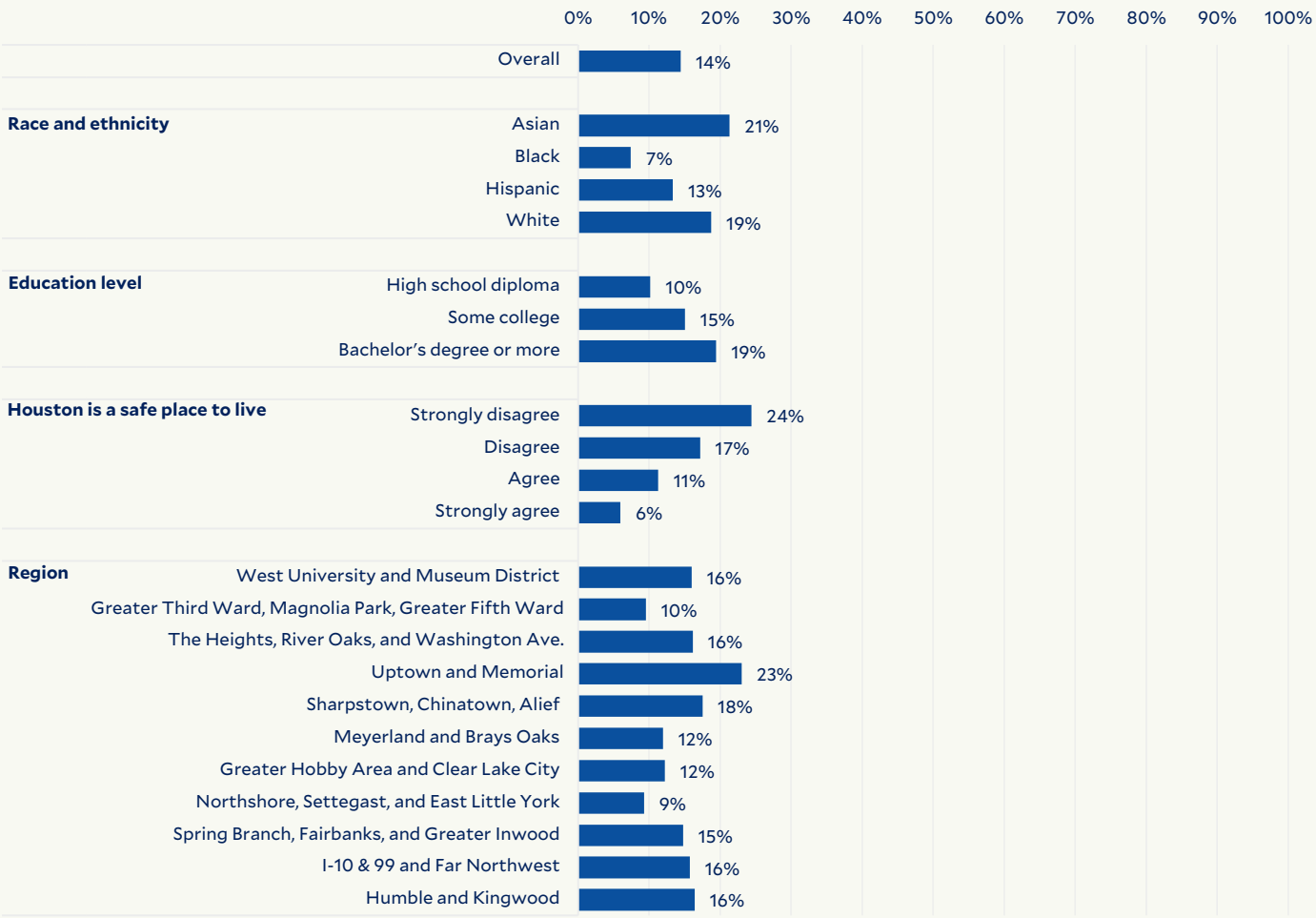


FIGURE 18

Few Houstonians expressed support only for "tough on crime" policies, but nearly 1 in 5 residents with a bachelor's degree did.



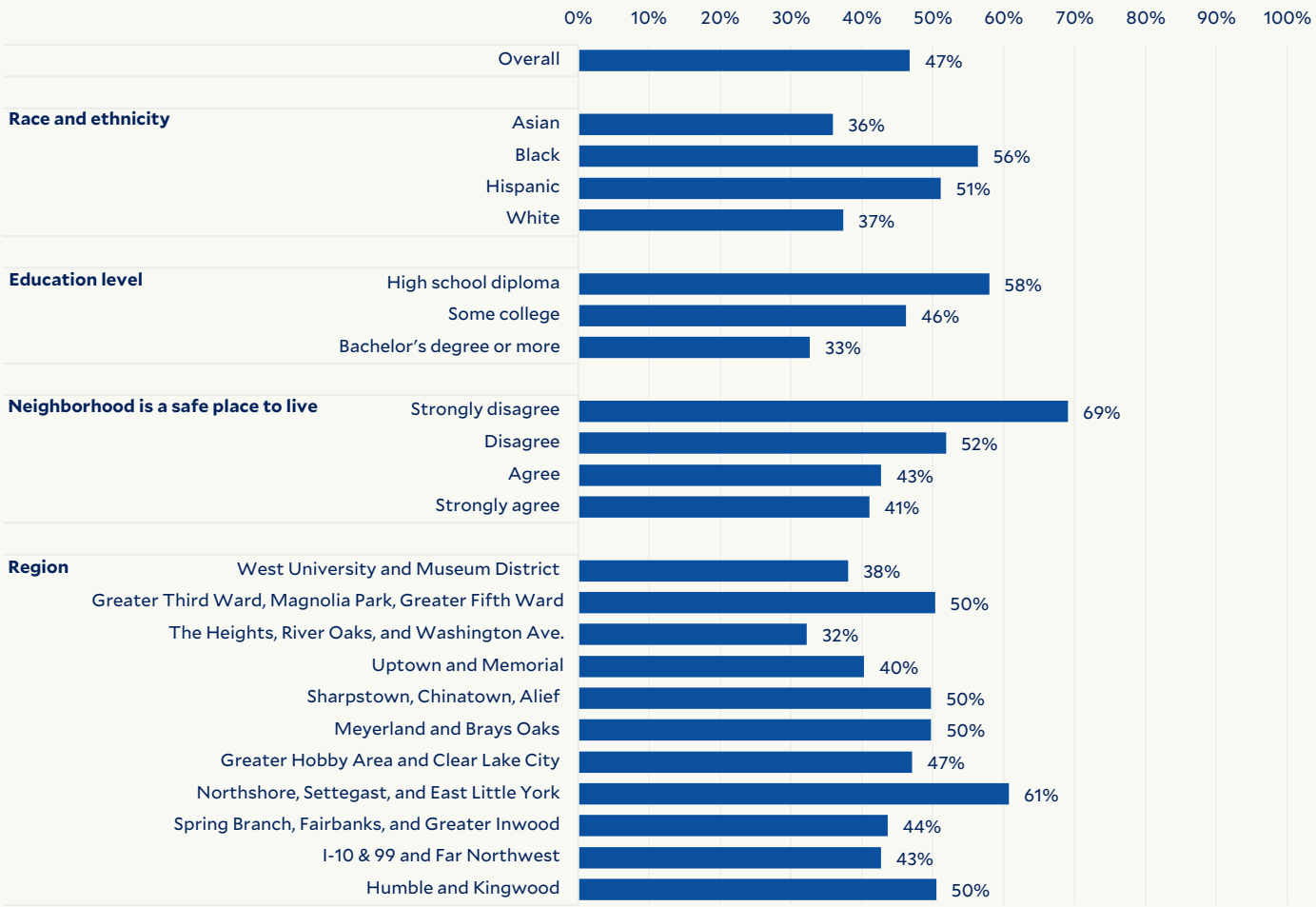
Singular support for tough-on-crime policies also varied depending on the region where the resident lived. The region with the most residents supporting only tough-on-crime policies was the Uptown and Memorial region with 23%, and it was the only region in the entire city to have more than 20% of its residents take that position. The region with the second-most residents supporting only tough-on-crime policies was the Sharpstown, Chinatown and Alief region with 18%. The regions with the fewest residents supporting only tough-on-crime policies were the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region with 9% and the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region with 10%.

Finally, residents' perceptions of the city as a safe place to live also shaped their support of tough-on-crime policies. About 24% of residents who strongly disagreed with the statement "Houston is a safe place to live" singularly supported tough-on-crime policies to reduce crime in the city, compared to 6% of residents who strongly agreed with the statement.

In terms of singular support for community policies, about 21% of residents strongly agreed that the next mayor should use it as the policy for reducing crime, while not supporting tough-on-crime policies. This percentage remained relatively consistent across race and ethnic groups and education levels, although it did vary a bit depending on the region where a resident lived. The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region had the largest share of residents singularly supporting community policing with 35%; no other region had more than 30%. The region with the fewest residents singularly supporting community policing was the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region with 13%.

FIGURE 19

Nearly half of residents expressed favor toward both "tough on crime" and "community policing" approaches to public safety.



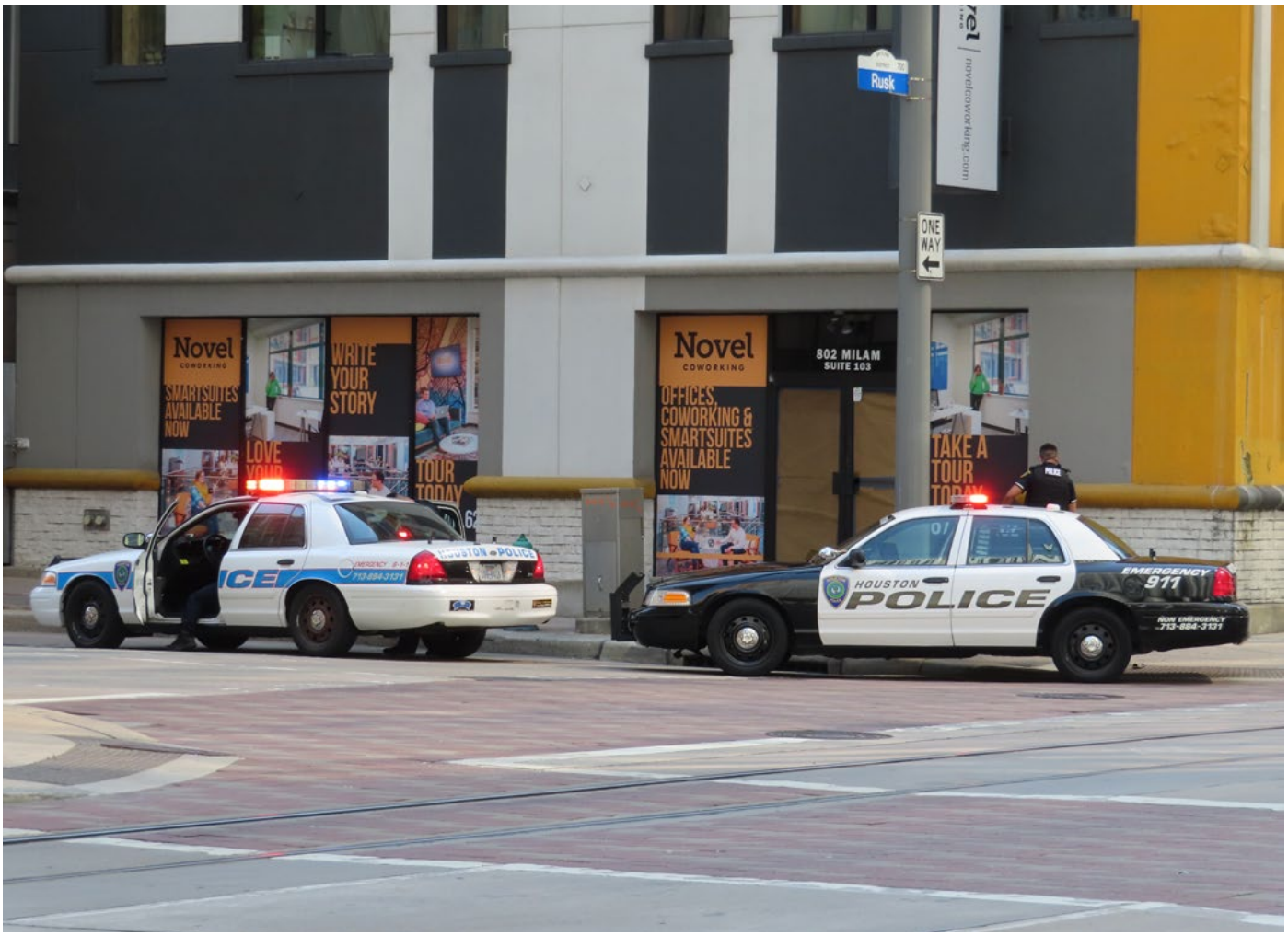


Photo by Jason Lawrence on flickr

Although half of all residents expressed dual support for both tough-on-crime and community policing policies, dual support was highest among Black residents, 56% of whom strongly agreed with both policies, and lowest among Asian residents, 36% of whom strongly agreed with both policies. About 37% of White residents and 51% of Hispanic residents reported dual support. Across education levels, residents who earned up to a high school diploma more frequently indicated dual support — 58% reported strongly agreeing with both policies, compared to 46% of residents with some college experience and 33% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or more (Figure 19).

Supporting both tough-on-crime and community policing policies also varied by the region where the resident lived. The region with the most residents expressing dual support was the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region with 61%. No other region had more than 60% of its residents express dual support, though there were two regions where at least half of residents did: the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region, and the Humble and Kingwood region, both at 50%. The region with the fewest residents expressing dual support was The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region with 32%, and the region with the second-fewest residents expressing dual support was the West University and Museum District region with 38%.

Level of support for both tough-on-crime and community policing policies also differed depending on residents' perceptions of their neighborhood's safety. Almost 69% of residents who strongly disagreed with the statement "My neighborhood is a safe place to live" supported both tough-on-crime and community policing policies, compared to 41% of residents who strongly agreed.

A clear consensus from Houston residents is that they want the next mayor to do something to reduce crime. Some residents are interested in seeing crime addressed by utilizing specific policies and practices, but others — particularly those feeling unsafe in their neighborhood and in their day-to-day lives — may be less concerned about the exact policy used and more concerned with something simply getting done.

Improve Physical Infrastructure

Nearly three-quarters of Houstonians said it was "very important" for the next mayor to focus on policies that improve the physical infrastructure of the city, including drainage, power lines, water supply and roads. More Black residents — 82% — said they wanted the next mayor to focus on physical infrastructure than any other race or ethnicity, with 73% of White residents, 72% of Hispanic residents, and 60% of Asian residents prioritizing the same (Figure 20).

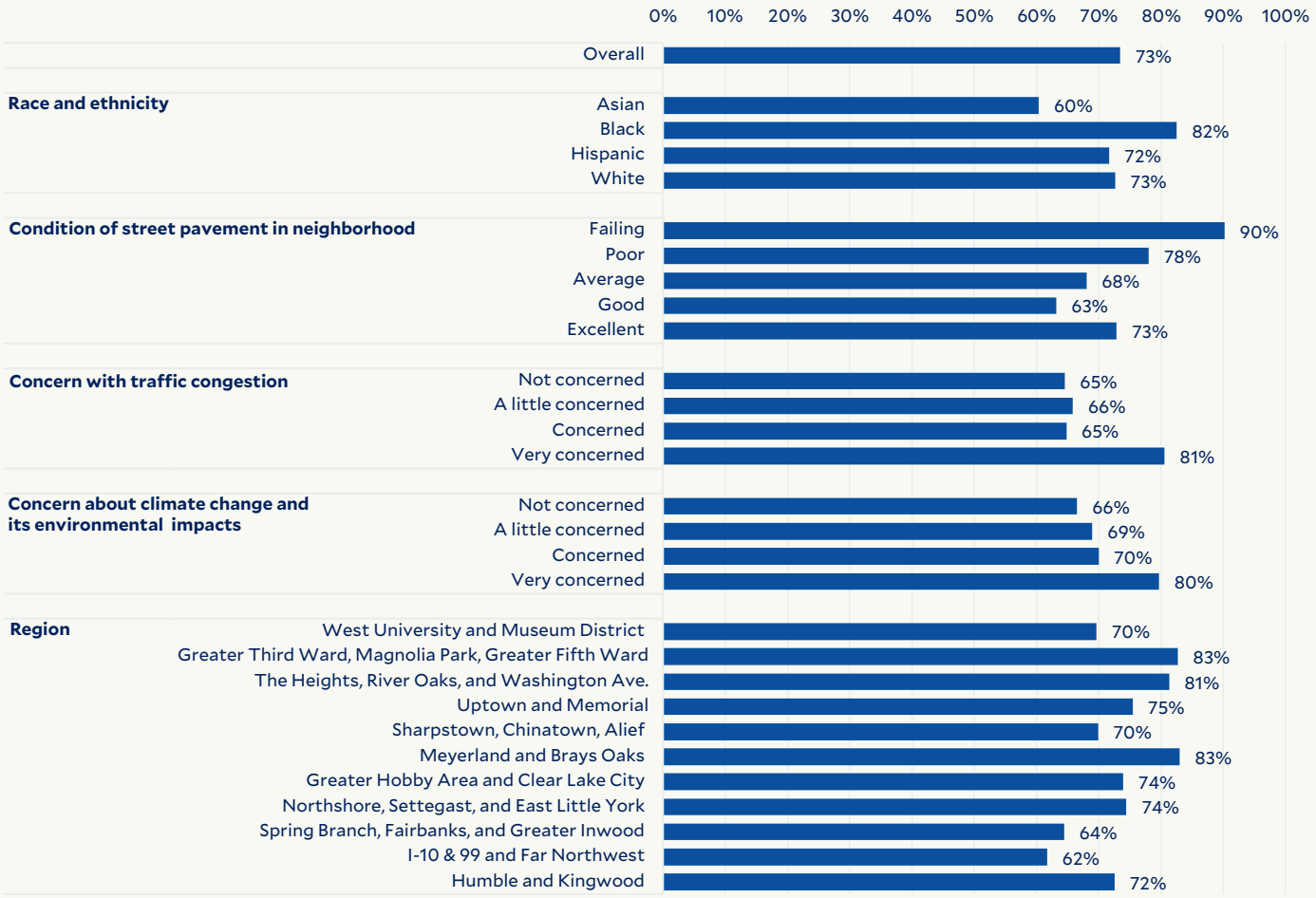
Residents' support of policies to improve infrastructure were also related to their views on the condition of their neighborhood streets and roads, concern with traffic congestion, and concern with climate change and its environmental impacts. The first two variables look specifically at attributes of physical infrastructure, mainly those of roads and their functionality and condition. The third variable serves as a proxy for residents' overall views and attitudes about how well Houston has prepared its infrastructure for the future.

About 90% of residents who rated the condition of the streets and roads in their neighborhood as failing said it was "very important" for the next mayor to focus on policies that would improve infrastructure, which was a higher percentage than any other group based on rating of road conditions.

Around 81% of residents who were very concerned with traffic congestion felt it was "very important" for the next mayor to focus on infrastructure, compared to about 65% of residents who were not as concerned about traffic congestion.

Finally, as concern about climate change increased, so did the percentage of residents listing infrastructure as something "very important" for the next mayor to focus on. Specifically, of residents who were not concerned with climate change, about 66% wanted the next mayor

FIGURE 20 **Nearly three-quarters of Houstonians want to see the mayor focus on policies that will improve the city's physical infrastructure.**



to focus on infrastructure, compared to 80% of residents who were very concerned with climate change.

Support for physical infrastructure improvements also varied across regions of the city. The regions with the most residents saying it will be "very important" for the next mayor to improve the physical infrastructure of the city were the Greater Third Ward, Magnolia Park and Greater Fifth Ward region (83%), the Meyerland and Brays Oaks region (83%), and The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (81%). Regions with the fewest residents saying it will be "very important" for the next mayor to improve the physical infrastructure were the I-10 and State Highway 99 and Far Northwest region (62%), and the Spring Branch, Fairbanks and Greater Inwood region (64%).

Investments in Houston's physical infrastructure have the potential to change how residents move and improve the city's resiliency, and may also contribute to a safer city. Residents' perception of the quality of their built environment was related to their perceptions of safety in their neighborhood, as residents who reported having better streetlights also reported feeling safer in their neighborhood at night. Specifically, only 17% of residents who rated their streetlights as "failing" also felt like their neighborhood was safe to walk in at night, compared to 63% of residents who rated their streetlights as "excellent." Similar patterns were observed according to residents' ratings of sidewalks and streets in their neighborhood. Building better infrastructure builds safer communities.

Despite some of the large differences in how people and regions prioritize improving infrastructure in Houston, 60% of every group and region examined said it was "very important" that the next mayor do something to improve the physical infrastructure of Houston. Across differences, a clear message came through: Residents want the city's infrastructure improved.

FIGURE 21

Overall about three-quarters of Houstonians said making housing more affordable was "very important" for the next mayor, but this percentage varied significantly across subgroups.

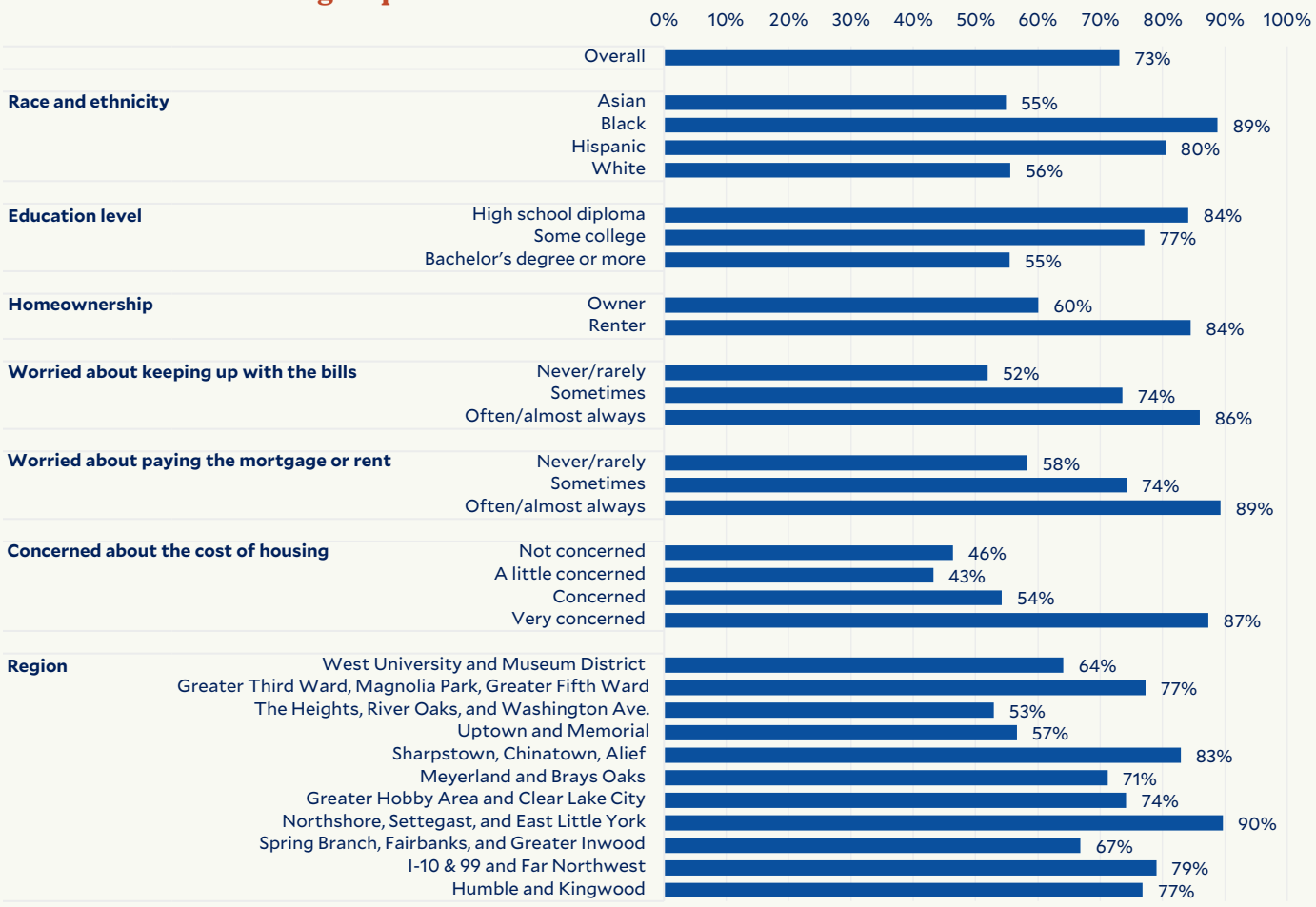


Photo by U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) on flickr

Make Housing More Affordable

Similar to the percentage of residents wanting the next mayor to prioritize improving the physical infrastructure of the city, about three-quarters of residents want the mayor to prioritize making housing more affordable in Houston. Support for making housing more affordable varies greatly from group to group, across geography, and based on the conditions and circumstances of residents (Figure 21).

There are large differences in people's support of making housing more affordable by race and ethnicity, with Black and Hispanic residents being more supportive than White and Asian residents. Specifically, about 55% of Asian residents and 56% of White residents feel it will be "very important" for the next mayor to make housing more affordable, compared to 80% of Hispanic respondents and 89% of Black respondents. Similarly wide gulfs exist based on education level: 55% of residents with a Bachelor's degree or more support making housing more affordable, compared to 84% of residents with up to a high school diploma. Yet another large divide exists between homeowners and renters: 60% of homeowners want to see housing made more affordable, compared to 84% of renters in Houston.

The region with the most residents wanting policies to make housing more affordable was the Northshore, Settegast and East Little York region, where 90% of residents felt such policies were "very important" for the next mayor. On the other end of the spectrum, two regions had less than 60% of their residents say the next mayor needed to prioritize making housing more affordable: The Heights, River Oaks and Washington Avenue region (53%) and the Uptown and Memorial region (57%).

Some of the largest differences in support for affordable housing were based on how respondents answered questions about housing costs. Only 52% of residents who never or rarely worried about paying their bills thought making housing more affordable needed to be a priority of the next mayor, compared to 74% of residents who "sometimes" worried about paying their bills and 86% of residents who "often" or "almost always" worried about paying their bills. Similar patterns were observed for residents based on whether or not they worried about paying their mortgage or rent each month. Residents who expressed the greatest concern about the cost of housing in Houston were also the ones elevating affordable housing as a priority area for the next mayor. Specifically, 87% of residents who were very concerned with the cost of housing said it was "very important" for the next mayor to do something to make housing more affordable. In contrast, only 46% of residents who were not concerned and 43% of residents who were only a little concerned with the cost of housing in Houston indicated that they felt the next mayor needed to focus on making housing more affordable.

Despite some large variability, most groups and regions in the city saw a majority of individuals indicating support for policies that would make housing more affordable.

Concluding Thoughts

As Houston prepares to go to the polls in November to elect its next mayor, the topics on the minds of most residents are: crime and safety, infrastructure and the cost of housing. This conclusion is based on insights gathered from all Houston residents, not just those registered to vote. For that reason, the top priority areas may not align with the priorities of voters, but for mayoral candidates looking to be a leader for all of Houston, these are the policy areas that most Houstonians want to see action around.

Yet even as these findings may provide a set of mandates from residents, they come from populations experiencing very different versions of the same city. For example, over 90% of residents in Uptown and Memorial live in a neighborhood they feel is safe. That statistic signals a fundamentally different lived experience compared to the Northshore, Settegast, and East Little York region, where only half of residents feel it is safe. Consider also the uneven distribution of worry across groups in Houston, where 1 in 4 renters is regularly worried they are going to be evicted, compared to 1 in 25 homeowners who are fretted by the threat of foreclosure. Houston is a majority-renter city, so having 1 in 4 renters fearful that they will lose their housing translates to hundreds of thousands of residents unsure about where they may be living next month.

For Houston's next mayor to truly address the mandates put forth by residents of the city, their efforts and policy proposals must begin to get at the root causes of the conditions giving rise to the mandates. One in three Houston residents lack a basic sense of safety and 1 in 4 renters anxiously wonders about where they will be living next month, meaning two of the fundamental necessities for human growth and development (i.e., feeling safe and having stable housing) are not met for many people throughout the city. Policies that fail to meet these basic needs and address the root causes producing them will at best provide temporary solutions and at worst have no impact and waste the city's limited resources.

Finding the right policy levers to respond to the immediate needs of Houston residents, while making the long-term investments to address systemic inequalities, will require informed and intentional efforts by the next mayor and their administration. The data in this report may be used by community members, advocates, and other stakeholders to hold the next mayor accountable by informing the debate around issues, pressing candidates to develop and take policy positions to address them, and setting a baseline from which future data and research can determine if real progress is being made.

Regardless of who wins the election, the next mayor must govern with all Houstonians in mind, understanding the context and circumstances forming the foundation of the community's mandates, and by doing so, lead all of Houston into a better tomorrow.

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